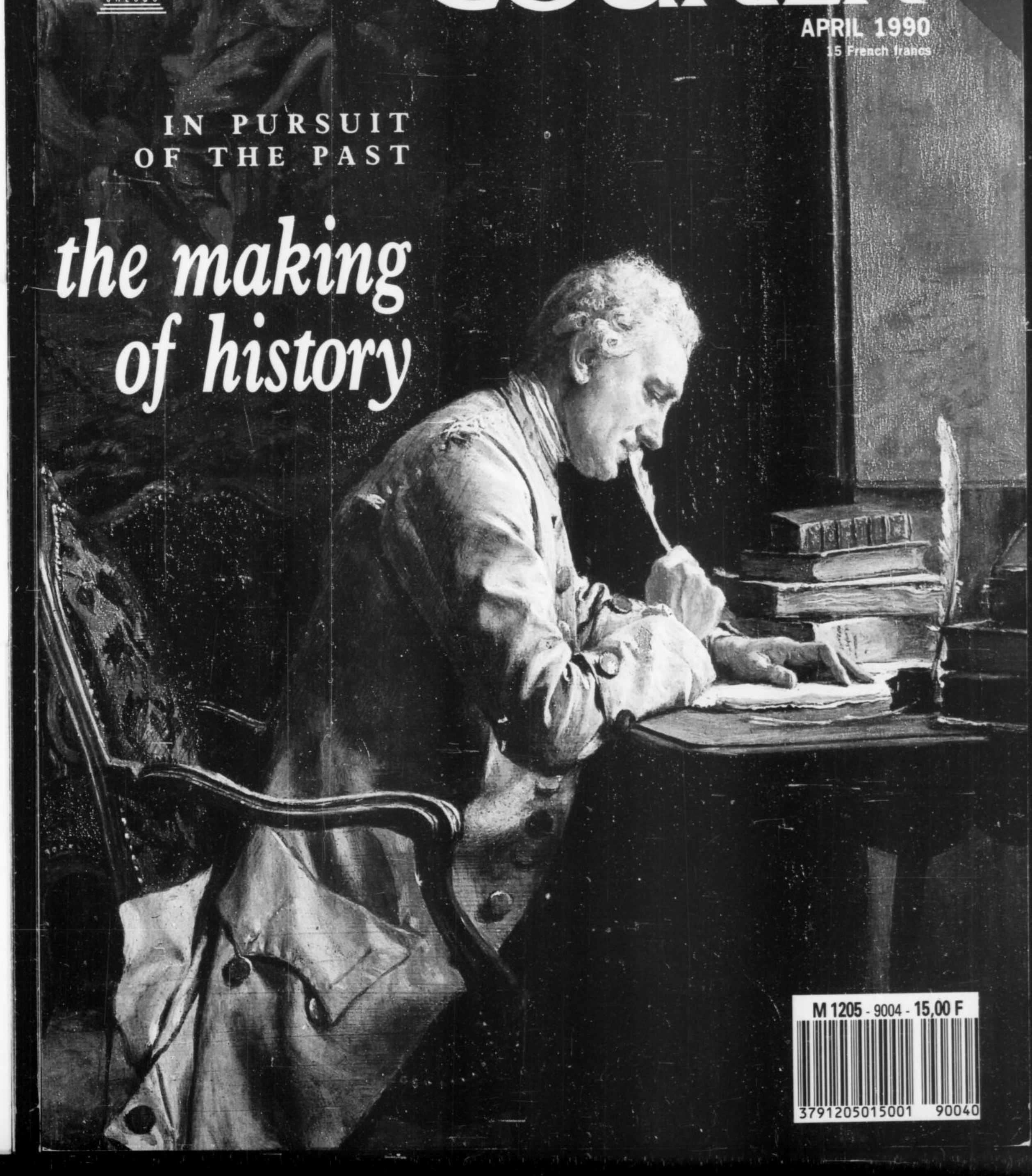
The UNESCO COURIER

'A PAST THAT WON'T GO AWAY'
Interview with German historian HINNERK BRUHNS

APRIL 1990
15 French francs

IN PURSUIT OF THE PAST

the making of history



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encounters

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

The Hole in the Water or Toussaint, Toussaint Louverture

27 x 36 cm
Indian ink
by Josette Verbestel

''(TOUSSAINT,
TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE)
A single man who fascinates
the white hawk of white
death
A man alone in the sterile sea
of white sand
An old darky facing the waters
of the sky''

These lines from *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Return to My Native Land)*, by the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, prompted a Belgian reader to make this black and white drawing. ''It was inspired by an attempt to understand and to translate an idea in poetry from another continent'', she writes.

APRIL 1990

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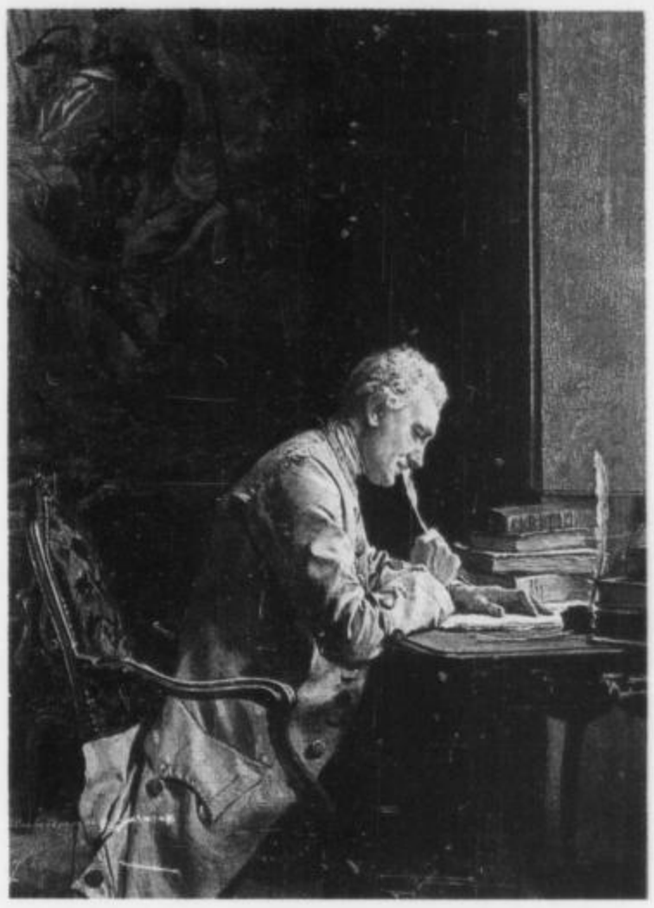

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Cover: *Le poète*, oil on canvas by the French painter Jean-Louis Meissonier (1815-1891).

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Today there are no more unexplored continents, unknown seas or mysterious islands. But while we can overcome the physical barriers to exploration, the barriers of mutual ignorance between different peoples and cultures have in many cases still not been dismantled.

A modern Ulysses can voyage to the ends of the earth. But a different kind of Odyssey now beckons—an exploration of the world's many cultural landscapes, the ways of life of its different peoples and their outlook on the world in which they live.

It is such an Odyssey that the *Unesco Courier* proposes to you, its readers. Each month contributors of different nationalities provide from different cultural and professional standpoints an authoritative treatment of a theme of universal interest. The compass guiding this journey through the world's cultural landscapes is respect for the dignity of man everywhere.

Special consultant for this issue: François Hartog, historian and director of studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

I N T E R V I E W

Some forty years after the guns of the Second World War fell silent, Ernst Nolte, of the Federal Republic of Germany, fired the first shot in "the battle of the historians". This polemic concerned the German people's relationship with their past and in particular with their darker memories of the nazi period. With the reunification of the two Germanys now seemingly inevitable, historian Hinnerk Bruhns points the way towards the rediscovery of an authentic German identity.

'A past that won't go away'

Hinnerk Bruhns

In 1986, the German historian and philosopher Ernst Nolte published an article entitled "A past that won't go away". The article sparked off a long and impassioned debate that came to be known as "the battle of the historians". It concerned the unique nature of the extermination of the Jews by the nazis, which Nolte contested. The sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas accused Nolte and other historians of becoming to some extent apologists of the Third Reich. What importance do you attach to this controversy?

— The real issue involved was the attitude of present-day Germans to that specific period of their history. It concerned the link between the collective memory and the notion of national identity in the Federal Republic of Germany forty years after the end of the Second World War.

This quarrel, which is in no sense an academic one, must be put in context. It is a response to the repeated efforts by certain leaders to use German history as a political weapon and to distort the image of history as seen through German eyes. The objective is to smooth the German people's tormented relationship with their recent past and with their history in general. A disturbed German identity constitutes a destabilizing factor both within and outside the country.

What are the historical roots of that identity?

— Therein lies the problem. On this matter there are two opposing viewpoints. Some hold that in searching for these roots we have to bypass the period of the Third Reich and make a direct link with the period that preceded it. Others maintain that the period 1933 to 1945 was a unique episode in world history, but that it cannot simply be erased. It marks a discontinuity, an anomaly which makes it impossible for Germans ever to have a straightforward relationship with their history.

To understand this break with the past, we have to go back to the position in which the Germans found themselves in 1945. After its unconditional surrender, the German state had ceased politically, militarily and morally to exist. In 1949, two German states, with diametrically opposed political and social systems, were soon incorporated into two equally opposed alliances: The front line of the Cold War passed through the heart of Germany and its former capital. The only way that the Federal Republic of Germany could build itself anew was by making a total break with the past and adopting Western democratic traditions that hitherto had been rejected in Germany.

How did historians react to this dramatic chapter of history?

— At first they were at a loss. Ever since the nineteenth century most of them had been convinced that their role was to work for the construction of a national German state. German national unity had been proclaimed the historic German objective and the task of achieving it had been entrusted to Prussia. This explains why, before the First World War, history in Germany was not open to the social and human sciences as it was in other countries. It sought to be the political history of the national state and nothing more, and this trend was strengthened after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles after the war. Thus most German historians were in a situation in which they were ready to adopt the perverted nazi concepts of race, of peoples and of the state and political power.

After 1945, most historians became interested in questions of universal history rather than contemporary topics. Nevertheless, there were some, like Friedrich Meinecke, who were critical of the German historiographical tradition. More often, however, the German drama was seen as an act of fate. Explanations of it were sought in the inexplicable, in demoniac possession or in mob psychology. Apart from a few scholars who had emigrated, such as Sigmund Neumann, the main body of German historians were totally bereft of appropriate instruments for studying nazism. The first step, therefore, was to invent such instruments.

What was the extent of this break with the German historical past?

— Both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were built up under the control of the victorious Allied Powers and were intent on distancing themselves from their past and their political traditions. Thus it was impossible for them to refer back to the Weimar Republic, which was then seen as a negative experiment whose institutions, it was suspected, had facilitated Hitler's seizure of power. Only the old German federalist tradition was taken up as a positive element.

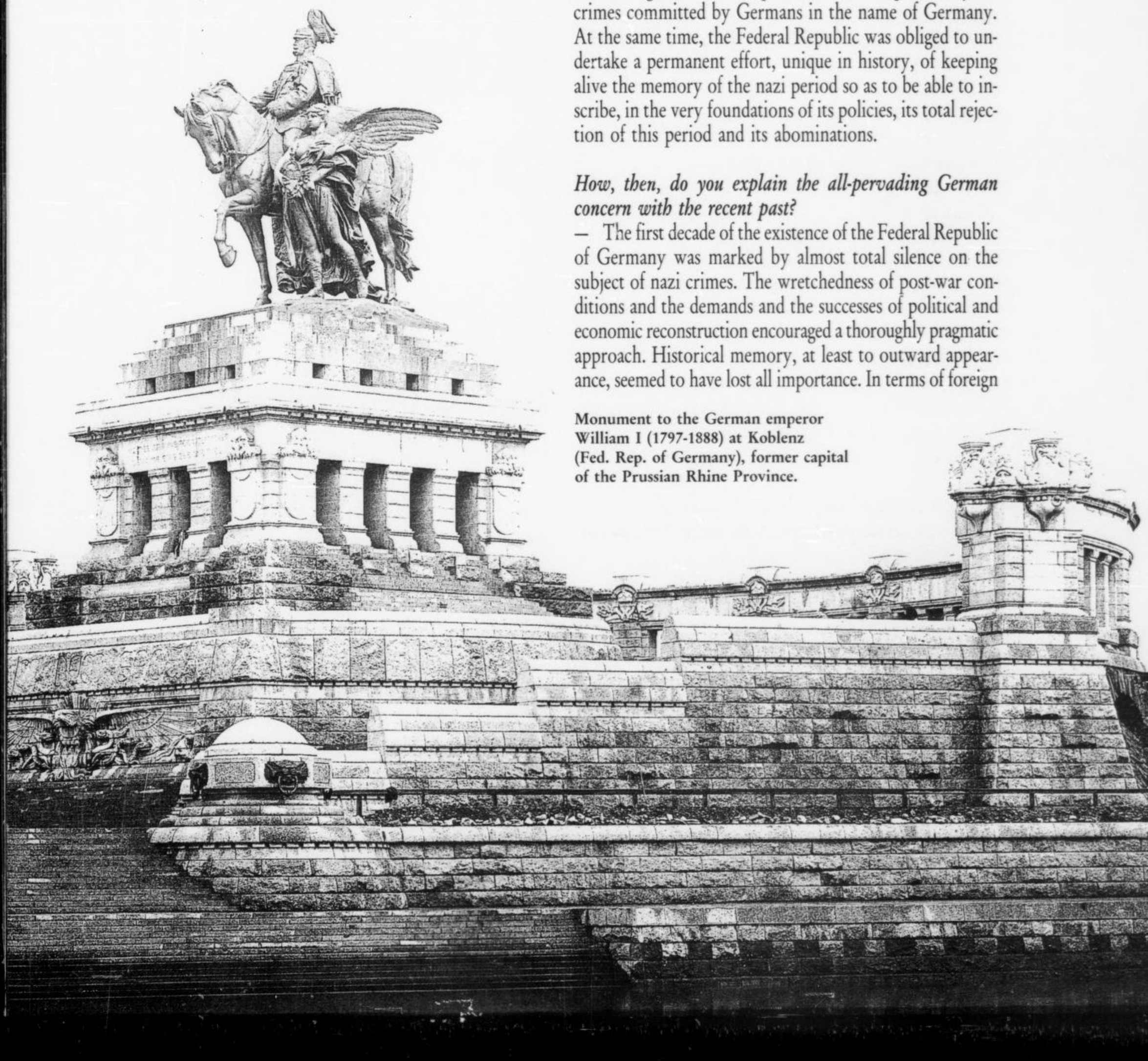
The collapse had been so complete that there was no opposition to this new start. Constitutionally, the young Federal Republic wanted to be cleansed of all trace of nazism, yet the higher civil service was impregnated with nazism. It became officially taboo to mention the past nazi links of many individuals and institutions. In this way it was hoped to integrate into the new democratic state, not the past of individuals, but individuals whose past had been surgically removed.

Furthermore, the policy of the political and military integration of the Federal Republic of Germany into the Western camp implied that the "German question"—the demand for reunification—would remain unanswered. This made for a very ambiguous situation. To safeguard this integration the Federal Republic of Germany was obliged to refrain from insisting on its status as a fully sovereign state whilst at the same time declaring itself to be the legal successor to the Third Reich.

The fiction of the frontiers of 1937 was maintained—and thus of a hypothetical return to those frontiers; on the other hand, the Federal Republic of Germany had to face up to the moral and juridical obligation of indemnifying the victims of German crimes during the Second World War. In so doing the Federal Republic assumed responsibility for crimes committed by Germans in the name of Germany. At the same time, the Federal Republic was obliged to undertake a permanent effort, unique in history, of keeping alive the memory of the nazi period so as to be able to inscribe, in the very foundations of its policies, its total rejection of this period and its abominations.

How, then, do you explain the all-pervading German concern with the recent past?

— The first decade of the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany was marked by almost total silence on the subject of nazi crimes. The wretchedness of post-war conditions and the demands and the successes of political and economic reconstruction encouraged a thoroughly pragmatic approach. Historical memory, at least to outward appearance, seemed to have lost all importance. In terms of foreign

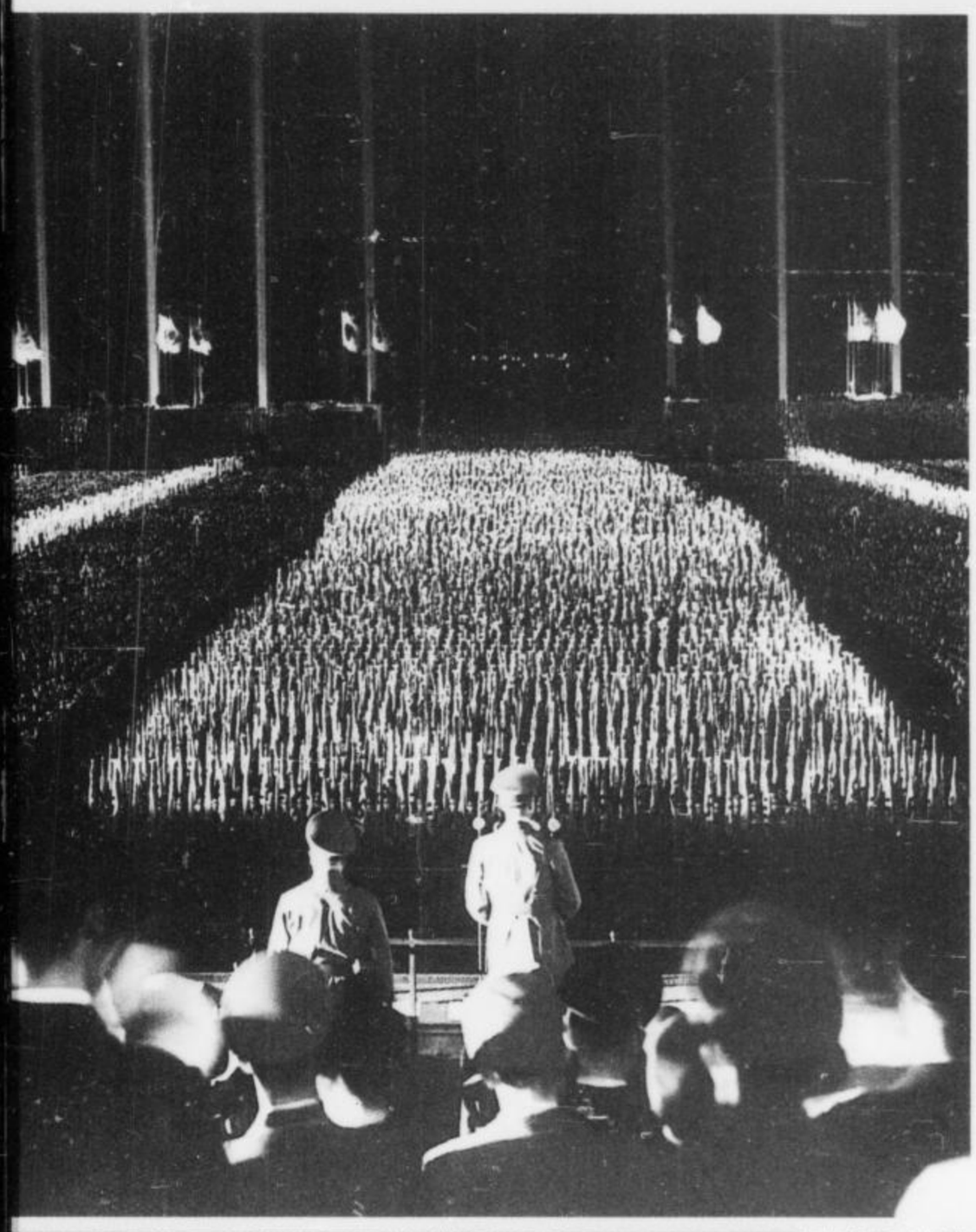


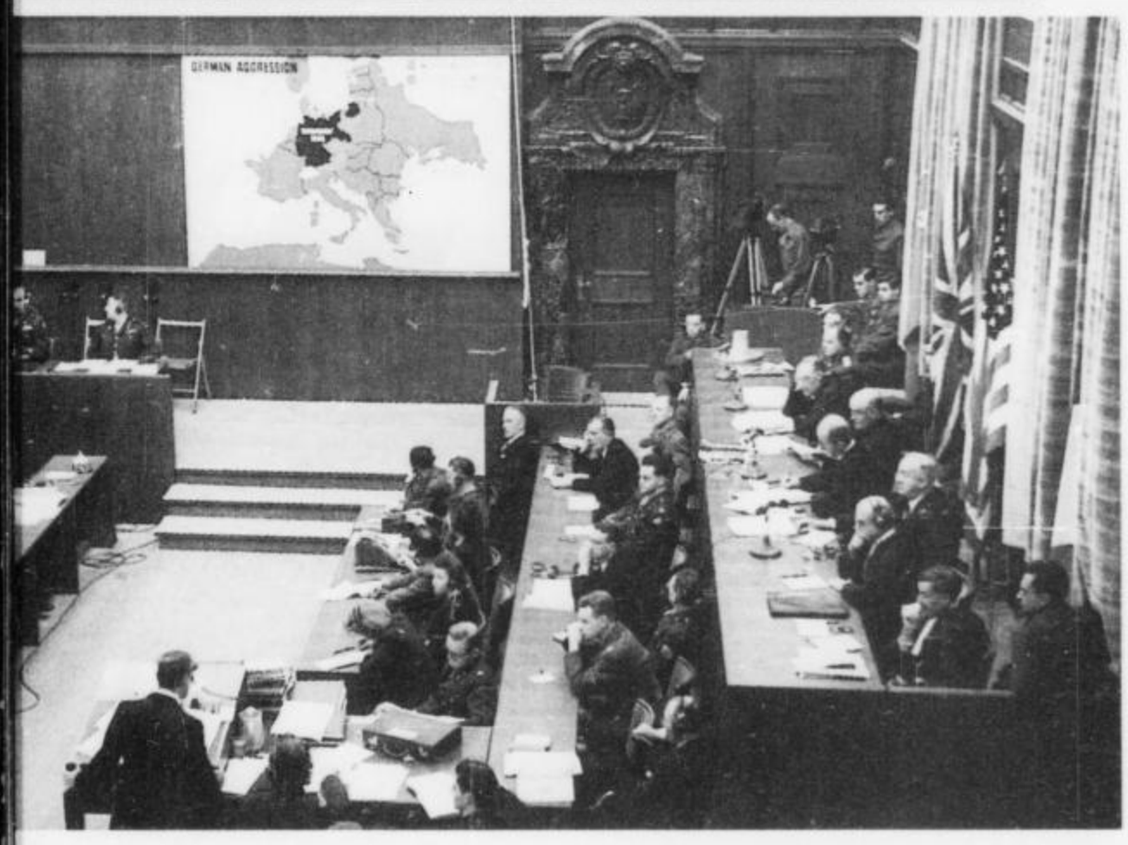
Monument to the German emperor William I (1797-1888) at Koblenz (Fed. Rep. of Germany), former capital of the Prussian Rhine Province.

policy, the Germans made the transition from being the guilty defeated to the status of partners within the Western alliance. Citizens and interest groups gave their wholehearted support to the new state. The Federal Republic was seen as a provisional solution, the German Democratic Republic was not recognized and reunification became an objective to be achieved within the framework of integration in the Western camp. In the context of the Cold War, the division of Germany made anti-communism and firm attachment to the West the hallmarks of the identity of the Federal Republic.

Forty years later, it can be affirmed that the democratic experiment of the Federal Republic has been a success. The Germans identify with their institutions, their economic system and Western democratic values. The Constitution has become an object of patriotic pride. The prospect of a united Europe has also strengthened the desire to make a break with the past. All this has cushioned the shock of the "loss" of a page of recent history, which was such a heavy burden to bear.

During the 1950s and 1960s, explanations of the failure of the Weimar Republic tended to point to its excessive democratic formalism rather than to the anti-democratic mentality of the traditional governing elite. In addition, the theory of totalitarianism, which historically and ideologically assimilated nazism and stalinist communism, helped to justify the exclusion from German history of the period





Top, Hitler, the *Führer* (leader), addressing a nazi rally at Nuremberg. Above, Nuremberg war crime trials (1945-1946). The wall-map shows territory annexed or occupied by nazi Germany.

Above left, Hitlerian propaganda poster from the early 1930s, bearing the slogan "No more war!" Left, Auschwitz, the largest of the nazi extermination camps (south of Cracow, Poland).

of the Third Reich. This was classified as "a régime arbitrarily imposed on the German people and which could be explained by Hitler's devilish powers of seduction and the success with which he manipulated the divided masses", a thesis denounced by the contemporary historian Hans Mommsen.

It was not until the end of the 1950s that historians began to undertake a painful revision of the image Germans had of their history. The first step was to highlight the authoritarian elements inherent in the German political system, the anti-democratic mentality of traditional political elites, the political inertia of the workers' movement, excessive nationalism and a desire for a powerful state and the specific form taken by industrial development in Germany.

For the first time the deep underlying causes of the process which led German politics to the crises of the twentieth century were brought out into the open. It was no longer possible to ascribe the rise of nazism solely to the economic crisis of 1929, to define it as a system of totalitarian domination imposed on the German people and to treat it as a parenthesis in the continuity of German history.

What effect did this new awareness among German historians have upon the great mass of their compatriots? Did it transform popular comprehension of German history?

– During the 1960s, the way in which nazism was presented in the media and in public debate was radically transformed. The Eichmann trial and the resumption of trials of war criminals broke the mantle of silence that had hung over the question of the extermination of the Jews. The Germans had been caught up by their own history.

The more public opinion became aware of the full dimensions and monstrosity of the Holocaust, the more evident became its uniqueness and the stronger became the rejection of this period of history and the refusal of individuals to identify themselves with it. This is how the historian Eberhard Jäckel underlined the unique nature of the assassination of the Jews by the nazis: "Never before had a state decided and announced, on the authority of its supreme leader, that, as far as this was possible, a certain group of human beings—including old people, women, children and babes in arms—were to be exterminated, and then attempted, by all the means within its power, to carry through this decision."

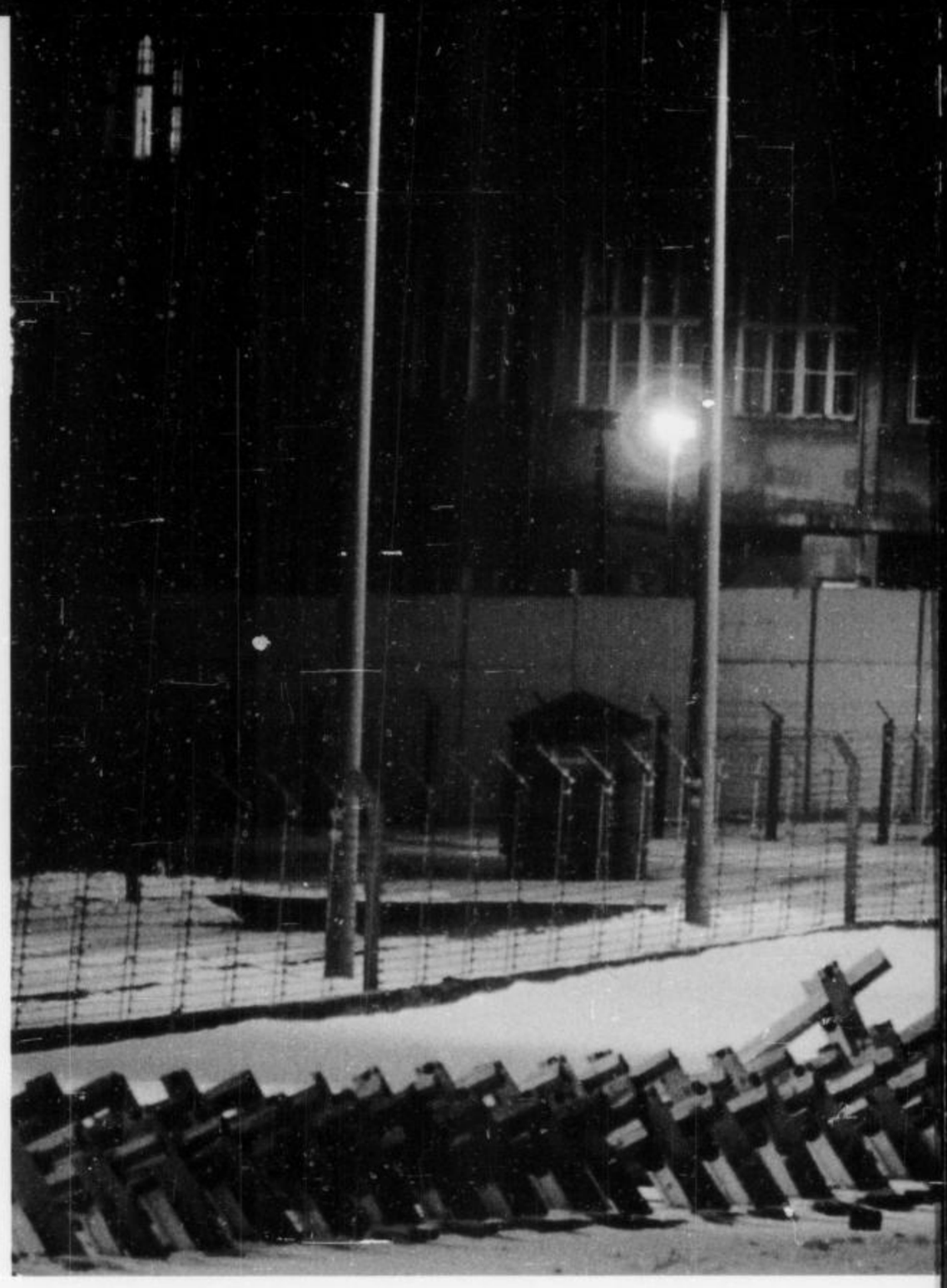
From the 1960s, the memory of Auschwitz became an "objective reality" in Germany. But such was the strength of their desire to escape acceptance of this period of their past that the Germans were not immediately overwhelmed by the moral shadow that it cast over their history. Auschwitz figured strongly in theatre and literature, but it was not until 1979, when the "Holocaust" series was shown on television, that the general public felt its full impact. Furthermore, with the rise of protest movements and their global rejection of bourgeois society, suspicion of nazism began to appear like a gangrene affecting the whole history of the Federal Republic. But by making an ideological assimilation between capitalism and fascism, these movements ended up by taking the sting out of nazism.

At the end of the 1970s, the general public was showing a renewed interest in history, as witness the success of the 1981 exhibition on Prussia, held in Berlin (West). Even if this

did not at first indicate an interest in the nazi past, curiosity about the history of daily life led on to curiosity about nazism in daily life. The shadow of the past seemed to be stretching out even further.

The thinking of historians about the way in which nazi power succeeded in imposing itself and about its structure finally came to have political implications. Many stressed the responsibility of the conservative elites and minimized the relative importance of the role played by Hitler. They maintained that Hitler would not have been able to impose himself had there not been, in the background, an enormous current of anti-liberal and anti-socialist feeling. This debate continues today. Those who criticize this analysis because it takes responsibility away from Hitler are criticized in their turn for holding that he alone was to blame and thus absolving the conservative ruling groups.

But as the social ramifications of the Hitler death machine and the extent of the responsibility of those involved in its functioning become clearer, the more evident becomes the extent to which the German bureaucracy and armed forces were compromised with Hitler. It becomes more and more difficult to exclude nazism from the general sweep of German national history.



In spite of this, more and more voices can be heard demanding a "positive identification with the German past". What is your interpretation of this attitude?

— Many conservative historians consider that, in the interest of political stability, national identity must be anchored in the past, but that this attachment must be so oriented as to give rise to a consensus. To achieve this some are ready to resort to tricks and ruses about the past. But there is another way of identifying with history—by choosing the path of lucidity and courage. This is the path chosen by President Richard von Weizsäcker when he declared: "guilty or not, we must all accept the past. We are all involved in its consequences and we are all obliged to bear witness to it." It is also the approach adopted by the historian C. Meier, who goes even further and considers Auschwitz to be an important element in our social identity.

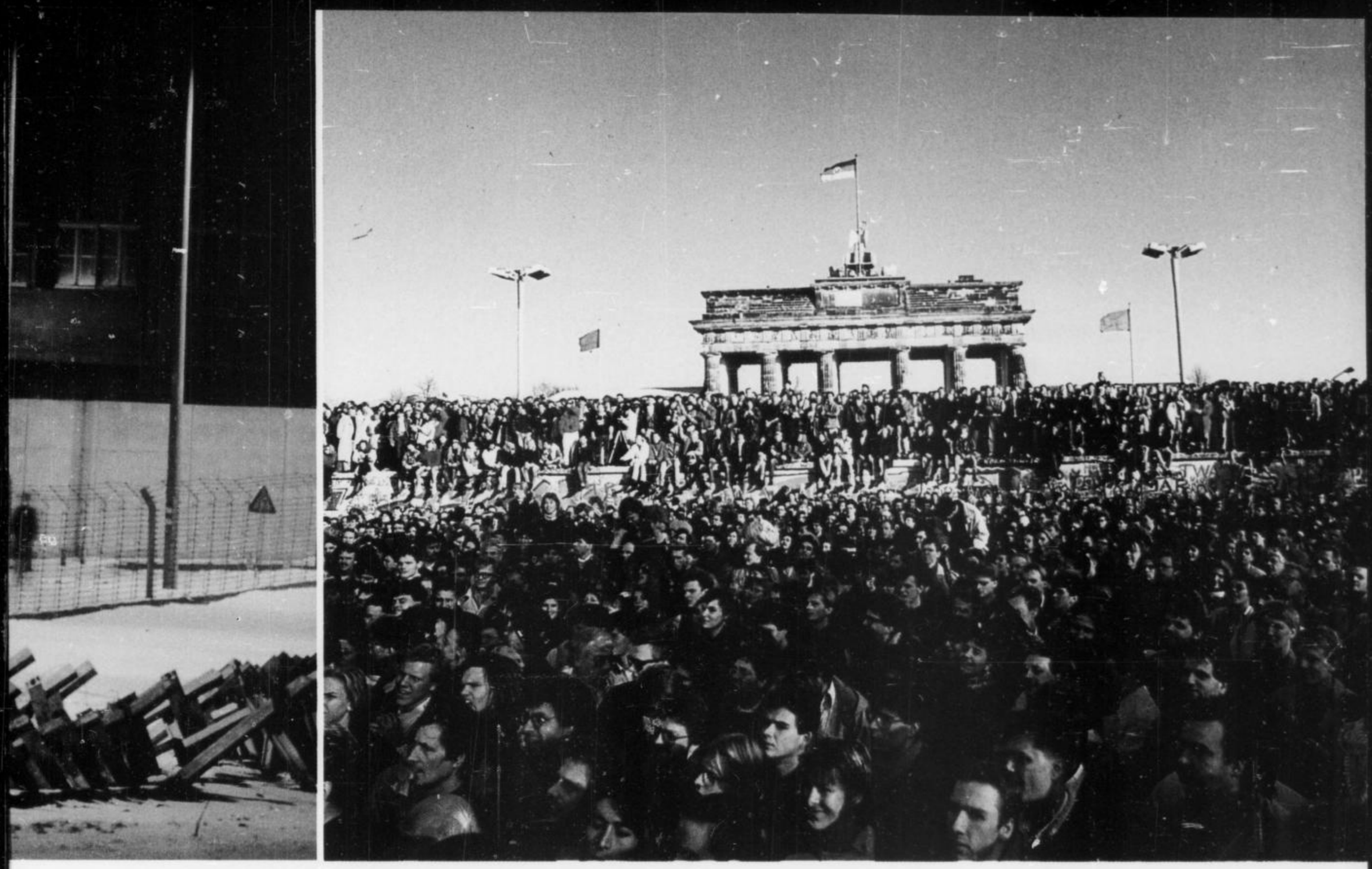
The demand for a selective "healthy" patriotism, which would efface Auschwitz from German history, disguises attempts, both deliberate and unwitting, to bring into question the very foundations of the historical identity of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is perfectly legitimate to retain the memory of democratic traditions that predate the Third Reich, or even to emphasize this or that unfulfilled potentiality of that past. These elements, however, weigh less heavily in the makeup of the German identity than those that marked the coming and the horrors of nazism. A lucid view of history must incorporate the totality of the German past, including all epochs whether they be positive or negative. By the very fact of its birth, the political conscience of the Federal Republic cannot have an unambiguous, aseptic relationship with German history.

It is not the task of history to manufacture a tradition that will receive general approval, but to throw light on events and to study their causes. This involves continuously reviewing and providing a historical basis for the image that we have of our history, not interpreting it to suit political necessities. Identity must be understood not as a given fact, but as an open, pluralist process of reconciling different interests and points of view. This is one of the advances made in the German approach to recent history—recognition that identity cannot be controlled on the sole basis of the logic of the national state. Basically, identity can only be an amalgam of a series of identities.

The specific nature of the German identity is the outcome of German history, which, in its turn, has always concerned the history of neighbouring peoples. But this is not the only reason for their concern. The terrifying path followed by German history after 1933 has also to be seen as one possible destiny for twentieth-century man and, therefore, as a factor in the general history of European peoples. Today, the new relationship which has been created between history and identity in Germany can no longer be seen as being solely a problem for Germans and their historians. It must be an integral part of any reflection on the way a united Europe will portray its history.

Do the events that have taken place in the German Democratic Republic since November 1989 bring up again, in a different way, the problem of the German identity and its relationship with the past? What, for example, is the position of the German Democratic Republic with regard to nazism?

— From the beginning, the German Democratic Republic defined itself as an anti-fascist state which was intended to represent a radical departure in terms of its relationship to German history. The break with the historical past was erected into state dogma and, as a result, as J. Rovan has pointed out, the German Democratic Republic refused to participate with the Federal Republic of Germany in indemnifying victims of the former Reich, to undertake an



The Berlin Wall, before (left) and after its downfall in November 1989.

equivalent effort to keep alive the memory of the crimes committed, or to seek out war criminals and bring them to trial. After the failure of the political system established in that part of Germany, however, society can no longer concern itself simply with a critique of stalinism: it will have to examine the question of the inheritance of the period from 1933 to 1945. The German Democratic Republic could no longer pick and choose from German history, nor claim descent solely from the "good" periods of "progressive" action. As it draws closer to the Federal Republic of Germany, it will have to share with it the German past.

How can two such divergent historical approaches be reconciled in view of a possible confederation or even union of the two states?

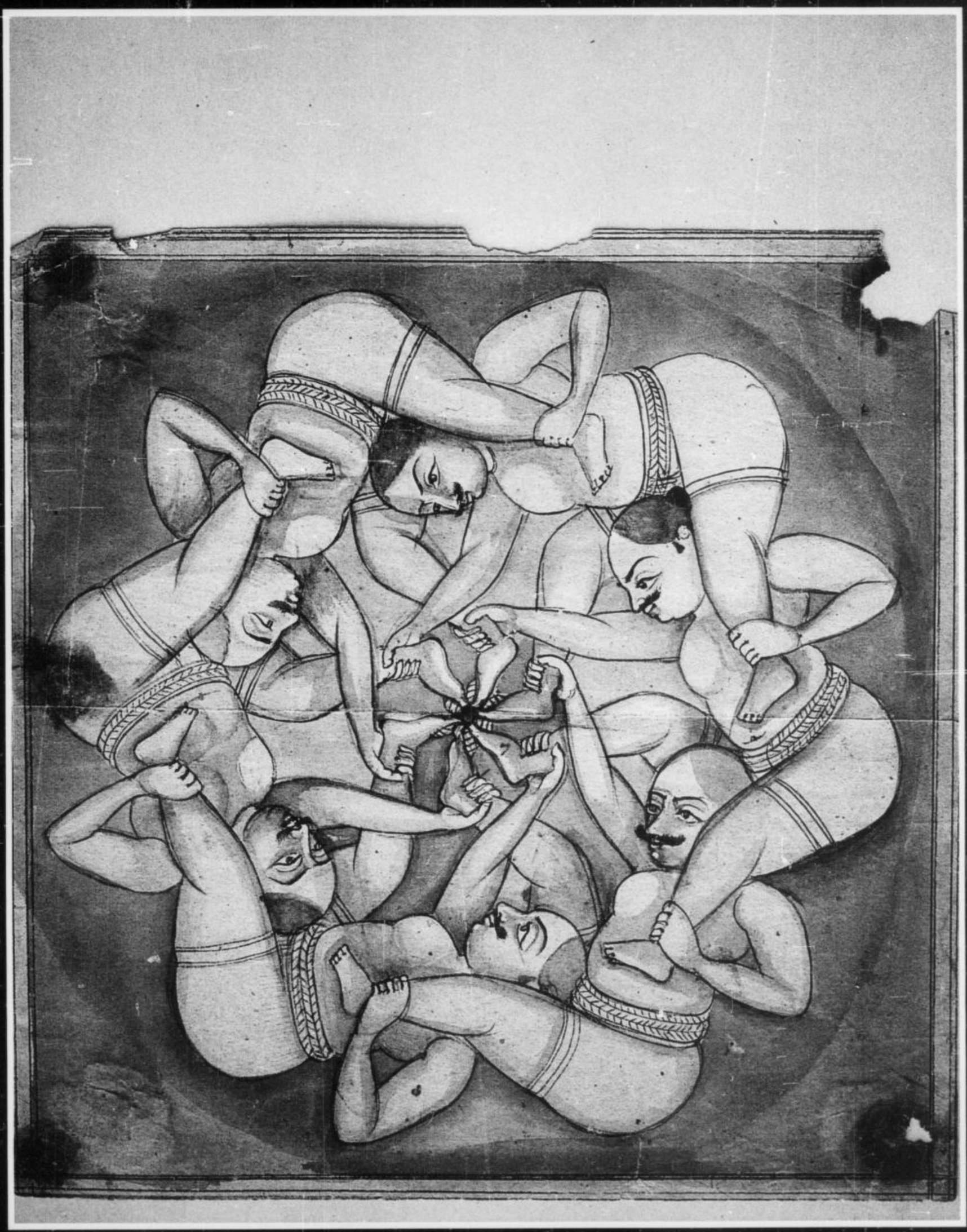
— On 9 November 1989, the Germans living in two states and under two radically different systems can be said to have found themselves once again members of a single nation. But for all that, it must not be forgotten that these two population groups have behind them forty years of differing histories, education and ways of life. Clearly this poses and will long continue to pose a number of problems. West Germans obviously see no reason to change their point of view, but, on the other hand, the collapse of the communist régime in the Democratic Republic does not imply that the East German identity will disappear overnight. There remains a sense of community, strengthened by the common experience of sufferings and daily difficulties, as well as, today, a sense of pride in having carried through a successful revolution. Although the Federal Republic exercises a great fascination and attraction for them, many East Germans are still critical of it. They still dream of another kind of "good" society, of a "true" form of socialism, and believe that they will be able to bring their own values and ideals to the construction of a new Germany.

What is the major task facing the historian today?

— In the German Democratic Republic, political liberation will enable—indeed, will oblige—historians to make a critical examination of the history of their country and, as a result, to ask new questions, to open hitherto inaccessible archives and to establish others. Now that official history has vanished, a true history will have to be written. It will be especially important that East German historians, in particular the younger ones, have the opportunity of working in collaboration with colleagues abroad.

The historian's raw material consists not only of events and "material" facts, but also of visions based on the imagination and memory of peoples. Today we have the impression of a quickening pace of history, of living at a point of new departure or at the end of the post-war period. At such moments it is up to the historian to recall the weight of the past—the Second World War, genocide—and to make people aware of all the changes that have occurred since then. The historian must act on the collective memory so as to put people on their guard against the use for political purposes, whether deliberate or not, of ingrained images and representations. In this sense, the historian, in looking towards the past, is working for the future.

In conclusion, I would like to recall something that Max Weber said in 1917 about the German nation, quoting a remark about Russia made by Aleksandr Herzen: "It is not, and must not be, the land of its fathers, but the land of its children." ■



EDITORIAL

IN his famous *Histories* of the Graeco-Persian Wars, Herodotus recorded a struggle for dominance in the ancient world that spanned almost a hundred years (c. 546 to 448 BC). From its pages there gradually emerges a portrait of the "Greek identity", or rather paired portraits of Greek and "Barbarian", since there can be no "We" without a "They".

It is not surprising, therefore, that Cicero called Herodotus "the father of history", since, whether they are concerned with the immediate or the distant past, historians inevitably come up against the question of identity, to the extent that the role and standpoint of the historian might well be defined in terms of this question. This is why the Editors of the *Unesco Courier* have taken reflection on the past, and more particularly on historical identity, as the theme of this second issue devoted to world historiography.

Herodotus was a man of the ancient world but, closer to our times, history and identity have become ever more intricately intertwined. For the peoples of the former colonies, the doubly difficult question is how to take back full possession of a past that the colonizers often exhumed and, in almost the same breath, destroyed, rediscovering it but judging it in terms of their own history.

Nineteenth-century European historians were obsessed with national unity, a notion which they approached from different angles but with a passionate, common desire to discover and promote it. Michelet favoured the direct approach, seeing France personified rising up before his eyes. Mommsen, less direct, was fascinated by the analogy between the ancient Roman Republic and its success in creating a united Italy, and nineteenth-century Prussia fulfilling the same role in Germany.

In the turmoil and confusion of today's world, at the threshold of a new beginning, the major task of historians, using tools, techniques and criteria appropriate to their discipline, is surely to examine the notion of identity and to define new identities. Throughout the modern world, the boundaries of identity, whether physical or symbolic, are breaking up and becoming entangled and inflamed. Meta-identities (Arab, European) and mini-identities (regional, ethnic, religious) are being simultaneously invoked. Identity, it would seem, is a concept in a state of perpetual re-assessment and re-creation.

No definition of identity can fail to take the past into account, but a definition that is based simply on a return to a "lost" past identity is pure illusion and could lead on to bloody consequences. It is perhaps at this point, where past and present interlink, that historians have a special contribution to make; for not only do they work with and in terms of time, they also have to think themselves into its successive stages.

As the French poet René Char once wrote: "No will or testament bequeaths to us the heritage of history."

"The Wheel of Time". Indian miniature, 19th century.

Three visions of history, three concepts of identity, emerged from the works of Theodor Mommsen, Jules Michelet and Fernand Braudel. Yet they shared a common desire to encourage popular awareness of the importance of studying the past. Perhaps Braudel's was the wider vision. To Marc Bloch's comment that "there is no history of France, only a history of Europe", he replied that "there is no history of Europe, only a history of the world".

Dawn breaks over the ruins of ancient Rome.

history and identity

THEODOR MOMMSEN

A FIERY PATRIOT

A historian of Antiquity who was also one of the greatest writers in the German language, Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903) made profoundly original contributions to knowledge of ancient Rome. His *History of Rome (Römische Geschichte),* the first three volumes of which were published between 1854 and 1856, earned him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902.

Mommsen was the first historian to apply to the study of history an array of disciplines ranging from jurisprudence, linguistics and the history of literature, to epigraphy, numismatics and archaeology. *The History of Rome* is at once a political, cultural, economic and social history. In his *Römisches Staatsrecht* (1871-1888; "Roman Constitutional Law"), he drew a picture of the Roman state which was long accepted as authoritative. For Mommsen, the Roman state was based essentially on the interaction between the magistrature, the senate and the community of citizens. From this relationship sprang public and criminal law, which Mommsen was also the first to study systematically *(Römisches Strafrecht,* 1899; "Roman Criminal Law"). In Mommsen's eyes, however, the key institution was the magistrature, both in the Roman republic and in the monarchy of early Rome.

Mommsen transformed the study of Antiquity both through his writings and through his capacities as an organizer by endowing scientific investigation of the past with the ambition and the opportunity to produce great instruments of research. He was the originator of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum,* and played a major role in the production of that monumental collection of Latin inscriptions.

His *History of Rome* was written in the years which followed the failure of the revolution of 1848. Hopes had evaporated of seeing Germany united by the forces of liberalism and democracy. Mommsen, who attached very great importance to German unification, was profoundly affected by this. At that time he supported the policy of Prussia being carried out by Bismarck and at first enthusiastically welcomed unification when it was achieved in 1871.

He saw a historical parallel between Rome and Prussia. The role of Prussia was to bring about German unity just as the mission of Rome had been to unify Italy. For him there was a resonance between the history of Rome and the times in which he lived.

Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903).

He regarded Julius Caesar as the architect of the Roman state, and believed that under Caesar's rule the freedom of the Roman citizen was guaranteed by what he considered to be an ideal balance between government, law, unity and freedom. But the evolution of the Roman empire under Augustus, especially the loss of liberties, brought Caesar's plans to naught, and his dream of creating a great Italo-Hellenic nation never came to pass. Mommsen's work ended with the death of Caesar; the volume which was to deal with the history of the principate, the first stages in the reign of Augustus, never appeared.

If Mommsen did not pardon the Roman emperors, he was equally critical of Bismarck for divesting German unity of its democratic dimension and depriving parliament of political power. He despaired of the attitude of the German bourgeoisie which was satisfied with power and prosperity, and was content to do without civic liberties. "I have always been a political animal," he wrote in his testament, "and wished to be a citizen. This has not been possible within the framework of our nation, where the fate of the individual, even the best, is that of regimentation and political fetishism."

As a historian, Mommsen was a man of his time. Even if we no longer assign a purpose to history, as he did, we can reflect on his conception of one of the historian's duties. "Whoever writes history and especially the history of the present," he wrote, "has a *duty of political education.* He must help those for whom he writes to choose and define their future attitude to the state."

HINNERK BRUHNS ■

Julius Caesar (100 or 101-44 BC).

Otto von Bismarck-Schönhausen (1815-1898).

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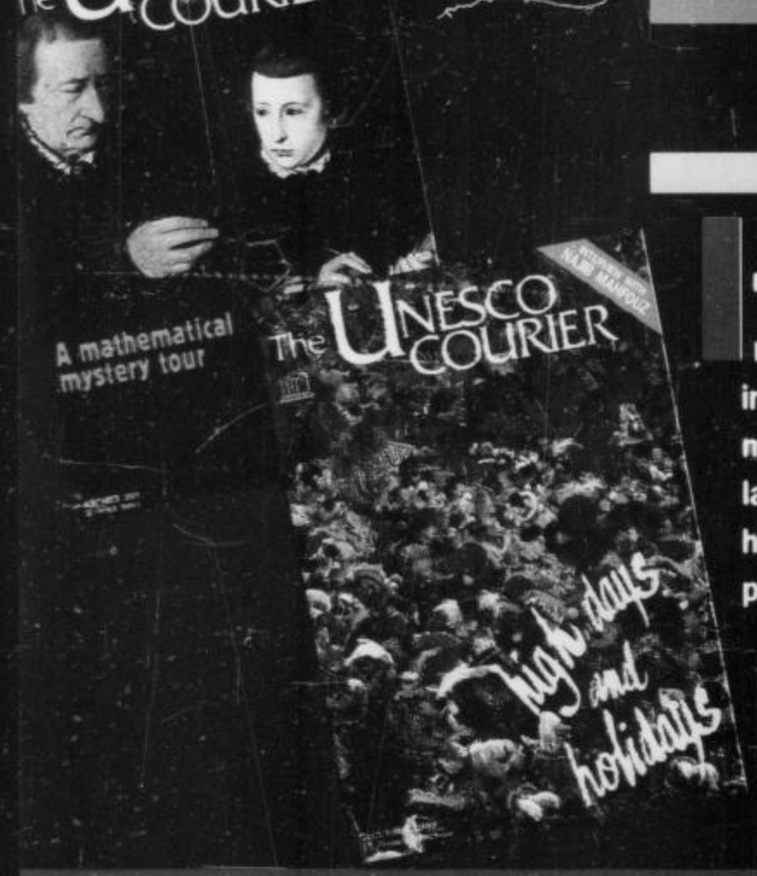

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JULES MICHELET

PROPHET-HISTORIAN

Jules Michelet (1798-1874).

WHETHER judged by his eventful career or by his writings, Jules Michelet was no ordinary man. The son of a modest printer who fell on hard times brought on by professional and political difficulties under Napoleon, Michelet was a fine scholar, succeeding brilliantly in his secondary and higher education and going on to become a professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (1827), head of the historical section of the Public Record Office (1830) and, finally, professor at the Collège de France (1843).

With his eloquence and ardent republican convictions, he soon turned his chair of history and moral philosophy into a political forum which resounded to his diatribes against the Jesuits (1843) and his declarations of unshakeable attachment to the achievements of the Revolution.

His courageous fidelity to the Second Republic led to the suspension, in 1851, of his lectures at the Collège de France and he was dismissed from his post at the Public Record Office for refusing to swear allegiance to Napoleon III. Although he stayed in France, in voluntary "exile" far from Paris, he remained, like Victor Hugo, an implacable opponent of "Napoléon le Petit". At his death, in 1874, a crowd of over 10,000 followed the funeral procession of the man who had spent his life in reviving the past the better to ensure a future of liberty and fraternity for the nation and the people.

The vast corpus of his work was not without defects. Michelet's aim was to be a historian who was technically unimpeachable. His work was based on patient and meticulous research in the archives. At times, however, he was betrayed by his poetic imagination—his apocalyptic vision of the year 1000, for example, is today unanimously rejected by the experts. He was also guilty of flagrant partiality and bad faith with regard, first, to the Roman Catholic Church, which he pursued with bitter enmity even into the dim recesses of the past, and, second, to the French monarchy, whose excesses of all kinds he highlighted while neglecting to make an overall appreciation of its achievements. In the end, this "high priest" of an ideology both humanitarian and patriotic, secular and Jacobin—the unwilling inspiration of lyrical outpourings at banquets and prize-giving ceremonies under the Third Republic—exasperates rather than charms the reader of today.

To stop at these criticisms, however, would be to miss the essential and to fail to understand Michelet's enormous contribution. Through the pages of his monumental *Histoire de France* (1833-1869), this prodigious architect of the past portrayed the countenance of France, endowed the French nation with a living body, and gave a voice to the French people.

For Michelet, as he himself would have been the first to admit, France is a "person" whose moral and material life is conditioned by its geography. It is no accident that Michelet saluted the birth of France, in about the year 1000, with a striking descriptive tableau in which the major provinces are depicted as physiological organs essential to the proper functioning of the body social.

Like Augustin Thierry and François Guizot, Michelet gave a completely new slant to the purpose of history. In place of the usual dry record of the deeds and misdeeds of princes and great men, he offered an epic account of the birth and development of the French nation. He saw "The Nation", not as an abstract, rational entity, but as a living, suffering being, of flesh and blood, that had to be apprehended with the heart and the imagination rather than through the intellect.

He had lived through the heady, dangerous days of the Paris Commune of 1792 and was the first to bring to life the rage of the populace that had punctuated the history of France from the time of Etienne Marcel to that of Danton. No one before him had managed to capture the spirit of an era, in particular of the Middle Ages, with such poetic and intuitive force. While it is true that he equated the history of the French people with Christ's Passion, sometimes in grandiloquent terms, he was driven by a desire to capture and illustrate the interactions between economic, political, social and religious events, thus anticipating by a century the work of the historians known as the "Ecole des Annales" and, in particular, Lucien Febvre's "collective mentalities" formula of history.

La France,
a bronze by Auguste Rodin
(1840-1917).

The last thing we should do is to limit our assessment of Michelet to consideration of the professor/ historian enveloped in the folds of his scholar's gown. He was the equal of the giants of the romantic generation of the 1830s, and with its vast scope his *Histoire de France* is close kin to Balzac's *Comédie humaine*. Strong in his creative imagination, Michelet was the first French author who really set out in search of the"remembrance of things past".

CHRISTIAN AMALVI ■

HISTORY RESURRECTED

When Michelet was appointed head of the historical section of the French Public Record Office in 1830, a hitherto unexplored region of research lay open to him.

WHEN first I entered these catacombs of manuscripts, this necropolis of national monuments, I could well have echoed the words of the German who, on entering the monastery of Saint Vanne, declared: "Here is my habitation and my resting place for all time."

It was not long, however, before I realized that the apparent silence of these galleries cloaked a movement, a murmur which was not the murmur of the dead. All these papers, these parchments, asked nothing more than to see again the light of day. They were not just papers, they were the lives of men, of provinces, of peoples. First the families, emblazoned in dust, cried out against oblivion. The provinces rose up, protesting that the forces of centralization had sought to destroy them. The royal ordinances of our kings proclaimed that the multitude of modern laws had not effaced them. As the grave-digger on the battlefield said: "If we had listened to them all, there would not have been one dead amongst them." All were alive, all spoke out, surrounding the writer with an army of a hundred tongues, brusquely silencing the loud voice of the Republic and the Empire.

Easy now, dead sirs, let us proceed in orderly fashion, if you please. You all have your place in history. Each individual, each community is as worthy as the next. Fiefdom, monarchy, republic, all have right on their side.... The provinces must live again; the force of geography must bring out the ancient diversity of France. This diversity must emerge again, but on condition that, as it gradually fades, it will be succeeded in turn by acknowledgement of the country. Let the monarchy, let France live again! Let a great effort of classification provide a guiding thread through this chaos. However imperfect, such a classification would be of value. The head may sit awkwardly upon the shoulders, the legs articulate badly with the haunches, it is still something to live again.

As I blew away the dust, I saw them rise up. From the sepulchre one drew a hand, another a head, as in Michelangelo's "Last Judgement", or in the Dance of the Dead—and this jerky measure that they danced around me I have tried to reproduce in this book.

Jules Michelet

Cover of a popular edition of Michelet's *Histoire de France* published in Paris around 1900.

HINNERK BRUHNS, German historian, is in charge of the Franco-German programme of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and director of studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. He is the author of a number of articles and books, notably on the cities of Antiquity and on Mommsen and Weber.

CHRISTIAN AMALVI, of France, has been a librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, since 1980. He has published some fifty articles and books on the teaching of history, historiography, and the history of national myths in France between 1789 and 1989.

FERNAND BRAUDEL

NAVIGATOR IN TIME AND SPACE

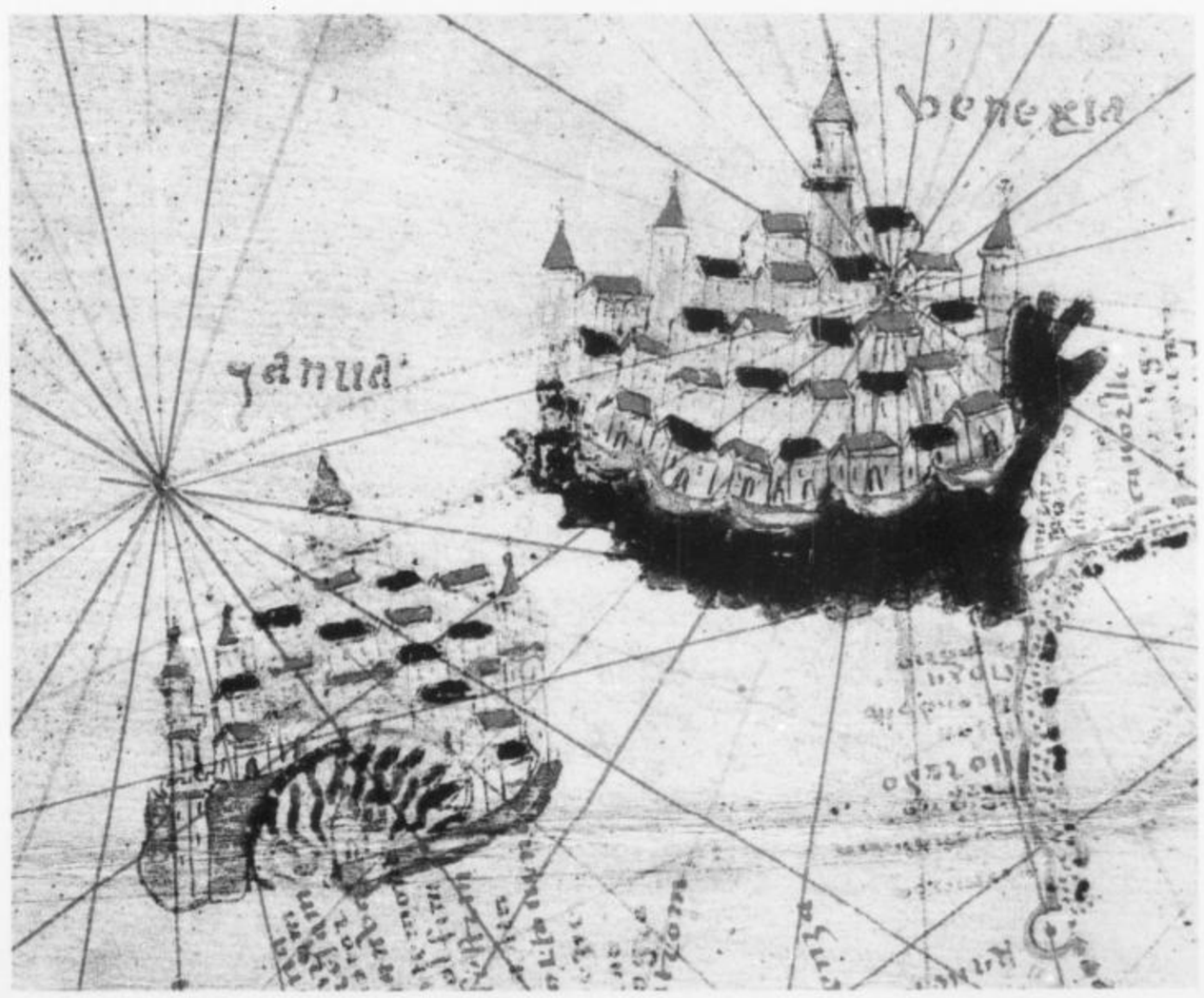
BY a strange coincidence, Fernand Braudel, like Victor Hugo a hundred years before him, was born when "this century was two years old" and died at the age of eighty-three. He might have been remembered only as the author of a dry academic treatise on "Philip II, Spain and the Mediterranean", had he not taken advice offered in 1927 by Lucien Febvre, the highly original scholar who was to be a co-founder of the influential historical journal *Annales*, and met the great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne in 1931. The influence of Febvre and the *Annales* persuaded Braudel to centre his work on the Mediterranean world rather than the caprices of Philip II and to study the empire of the Venetian merchants and Genoan bankers instead of the Spanish empire during Spain's Golden Century.

Braudel sought to grasp the original characteristics, terrestrial and maritime, of the Mediterranean as a physical and geological entity transcending national, religious and linguistic frontiers and to record the fluctuating patterns of human activity in the area—the unchanging physical realities of life, mercantile trade, the meandering course of what he called "battle-history". To accomplish his project, he evolved a global method of investigation which could be applied throughout the region.

He made a famous dissection of history into three different planes: a history which is virtually unchanging, silent, *mineral*, the story of man's contact with the natural environment; *social* history which relates the life of economic groups, peasant and urban societies, territorial states; and the clamour of short-lived *events* that furrow the surface of things.

Revolutionary by virtue of its geohistorical conception of space and time, Braudel's thesis was published in 1949 as *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen a l'époque de Philippe II (The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II)*, a title in which the sea, not Philip II, holds precedence. For its author, it opened the doors of the Collège de France, where Braudel succeeded Lucien Febvre in the chair of the History of Modern Civilization.

Braudel's famous conception of "historical time", magisterially expounded on 1 December 1950 at his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, found its ultimate expression in his major trilogy *Les structures du quotidien, Les jeux de l'échange*, and *Le temps du monde* (1979). In these works Braudel constructs a three-storey edifice as he did in *The Mediterranean* (although one with infinitely vaster proportions since he is evoking virtually all the continents): "at the base, a many-sided, self-sufficient, routine material life; above,



Fernand Braudel (1902-1985). Below, a 15th-century portolan (navigational chart) showing two of the great maritime cities of the Mediterranean, Genoa and Venice. Marciana Library, Venice.

a more clearly delineated economic life which tended to merge into the economy of market competition; on the third storey, capitalist action."

To make this remarkable global assessment of the world between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the industrial revolution, Braudel invented a new perception of time: the long term *(longue durée).* He added to the historian's equipment highly sophisticated research techniques borrowed from the human sciences. "History itself," he admitted, "excites me less than this associated panoply of the human sciences... History itself, to be valid, must be incorporated... into the other human sciences and for their part the human sciences should take into consideration the historical dimension." Thus armed, Braudel resembled one of those bold Renaissance navigators who abandoned the coastal trade practised by their ancestors and deliberately set sail for the high seas. For him the high seas were the total history which Henri Pirenne, Henri Hauser, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch and Ernest Labrousse had explored before him and whose first scientific maps he drew.

Braudel was also a peerless organizer who protected his pioneering experiments and those of his pupils within a flexible institutional framework. In 1948 he participated in the foundation of the 6th Section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, which became under his leadership between 1956 and 1972 an international centre for the study of the "new history". In 1962 he created and administered until his death another leading institution for the study of the social sciences, the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. Between 1946 and 1956 he directed with Lucien Febvre and thereafter alone, the review *Annales,* which was instrumental in implanting social and economic history in the French university system between 1955 and 1965.

Paradoxically, this great scholar who was also no mean writer, was better known outside France—in the Mediterranean basin, naturally, but also in Poland and the United States—than in his own country. The wider French public only discovered the master of the *Annales* school in 1979 when he appeared on the television literary programme *Apostrophes* and talked about his work *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme (Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century).* With Claude Lévi-Strauss and Georges Dumézil, Braudel was one of the last great French intellectuals who became a legend in their lifetime. He was elected to the French Academy in 1984.

CHRISTIAN AMALVI ■

THE ROLE OF THE PAST IN FRENCH LIFE

EDUCATING THE NATION

BY CHRISTIAN AMALVI

HISTORY occupies such an important place in French society today—in primary and secondary schools, at universities, research institutions and the media—that it is difficult to imagine that this has not always been the case. But the facts show that the great respect for the historian's functions, notably as a teacher, has not always existed but is the offshoot of a stormy past. The story can be divided into three main periods, corresponding to radical changes in the French cultural landscape.

History on the sidelines: 1660-1814

In institutions of secondary education under the *ancien régime*, history was a footnote to the Classics. Inordinate importance was attached to Latin. History was taught only indirectly by way of historical commentaries on Latin texts, and was learnt by translating the works of Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Suetonius, Tacitus, Quintus Curtius and other Latin authors. It had no independent existence outside literature nor were any specialists trained to teach it.

History was taught in certain colleges but did not form part of the regular curriculum. It was taught outside school hours on Sundays and feast days and during the holidays.

History was considered to have only one direct educational function, and that was a moral one. The only real purpose of ancient history was to provide a fund of moral examples. During the Renaissance, the study of history was confined to princes, who were supposed to derive specific political rules from the past. In the late seventeenth century history teaching was gradually extended throughout the ruling classes, a restricted group comprising the rich bourgeoisie, the nobility and ecclesiastical dignitaries.

Clio, the Muse of history, instructs a young noble. French allegorical engraving, 18th century.

Although many reform-minded teachers wished to encourage the use of national history as a basis for instruction, the bourgeoisie who supported the Revolution in 1789 were more familiar with the heroes of Livy and Tacitus than with the great figures of French history.

The 19th century, the golden age: 1814-1914

It is commonly said that in France the nineteenth century—the age of Augustin Thierry, Jules Michelet, Hippolyte Taine, Ernest Renan among others—was an exceptional period for the writing of history. This is true of history as an intellectual and literary activity, but is less true if the place of history is examined in primary, secondary and higher education against the background of the political vicissitudes of France between 1814 and 1914. The alternation of liberal and conservative regimes had profound repercussions on the teaching of history, which had mixed fortunes.

The early years, from 1814 to 1830, were not easy. Scarcely had history been made a compulsory subject in secondary schools, by a decree of 15 May 1818, than it fell out of favour. In 1820, after the ultra-royalists had come to power, several chairs of history were abolished in Paris lycées, as was Guizot's course in modern history at the Sorbonne.

The period of the July monarchy was, on the contrary, a golden age. Historical studies were given a boost by the establishment of the Committee of Historical Works in 1834. In 1838 Michelet, who had been appointed head of the historical section of the Public Record Office in October 1830 by Guizot, was elected as a professor at the Collège de France (see page 15). Most important of all, the regime endeavoured to give increasing prominence to history in the lycées and colleges. Starting in 1830 between four and six new history teachers were appointed annually on the basis of a competitive examination. Between 1830 and 1848 the number of history textbooks rose sharply. By the eve of the 1848 Revolution, history was considered to be a subject of the first importance in secondary education, although its impact had still not reached the mass of the people.

There were several reasons why the situation had improved. During this period two celebrated historians, Guizot and Adolphe Thiers, held office as premier. At a deeper level, the period coincided with the Romantic movement which rediscovered the past in general and the Middle Ages in particular, just as the first humanists of the Renaissance had rediscovered Antiquity: as eras that were gone forever.

In the same way, the watershed of the Revolution conferred a mythical dimension on French national history, and in the early nineteenth century learning about it was akin to engaging in a sacred quest for the origins of the nation. Finally,

La République (1848), by the French artist Jules Claude Ziegler (1804-1856).

at the political level, King Louis-Philippe sought to steady his shaky throne by appealing to history to support the claim that his regime was the "happy medium", the necessary outcome of the whole of French history and the only government capable of reconciling the *ancien régime* and the Revolution.

This momentum was shattered during the authoritarian years of the Second Empire which complained that history was a subversive subject! In 1852 the competitive examination for secondary-school history teachers was abolished and Michelet was driven out of the Collège de France and obliged to resign from his post at the Public Record Office. For more than ten years order prevailed in a discipline which had been forced to toe the line, and it was not until the appointment, during the liberal years of the Empire, of an eminent historian of Rome, Victor Duruy, to the post of minister of education (1863-1869), that history recovered its place in the lycées and colleges and began to be introduced officially into primary-school curricula. However, Duruy's liberal reforms were checked by the disasters of the "terrible year" which saw France's military defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870 and the proclamation of the Paris Commune in the spring of 1871.

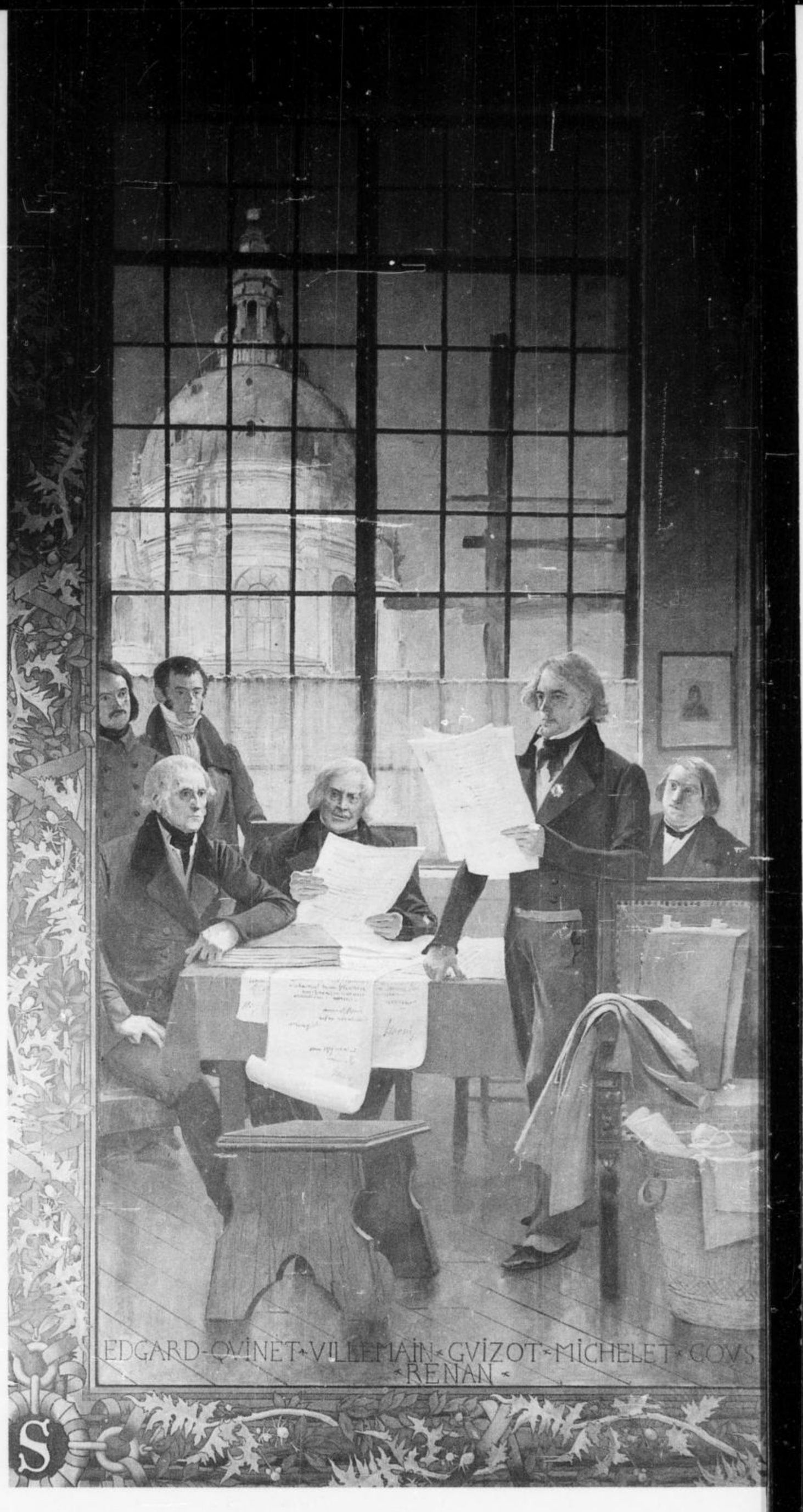
A consensus began to emerge regarding the

need to give the whole of society a solid basis of knowledge about the national past in order to revitalize the country after its collapse. But political disagreements re-emerged when the time came to define the content of history teaching. The Catholics were bent on resuscitating an idealized Middle Ages, a Christian model in which inspiration for the "salvation of France" was to be sought. On the left, the Republicans set store by the study of the Revolution and its aftermath as a training for enlightened citizens, aware of their political duties, and as a means of sparing France the infernal cycle of revolution followed by monarchist or Bonapartist repression. This programme of reform only began to be applied by Jules Ferry and his friends in 1880.

The Third Republic ushered in a second golden age for history which was to last far longer than the first under the July monarchy. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, positivism provided historians with a method that had been tried and tested and with a well-organized stock of knowledge. Secondly, the Republic had a far broader social base than the hesitant Orleanist monarchy and was able as a result to extend the influence of history to the whole of French society.

Thanks to the evergreen history textbooks of Ernest Lavisse (especially those published in 1884 and 1913), the portrayal of the nation's past became, in primary schools, the natural means of diffusing Republican ideology among the broad mass of French people, and provided an ideal opportunity for the consecration of the *Patrie,* of the state as the custodian of national unity, and of democracy, the daughter of the French Revolution, in the villages.

At the same time, higher education institutions ceased to be regarded as places where fashionable lectures were given and gradually acquired a pre-eminent role in the training of secondary-school teachers and as centres for scientific research modelled on the German universities. A law passed in 1902 gave greater weight to contemporary history in secondary education as an instrument of civic instruction for the elite, dedicated to the cult of scientific and social progress. This edifice, symbolized by the new Sorbonne rebuilt in the heart of the old Latin Quarter between 1883 and 1901, was to last, in spite of increasingly serious fissures, more or less until the beginning of the 1960s.



From positivism to television: 1919-1989

The twentieth century has seen unprecedented developments in the teaching of history. At primary level, it was thanks to the patriotic spirit instilled by the textbooks of Lavisse and his successors that the French *poilu* held out in the mud of the trenches for four long years and that the flame of the Resistance was not extinguished beneath the nazi heel. The teaching of history in secondary schools, associated with the teaching of philosophy, also achieved the purpose set by the reformers of 1902. It contributed to the emergence of an elite imbued with republican ideals, able to withstand the temptation of fascism in the 1930s and to rebuild a democratic France after 1945. Finally, the reform of higher education lived up to the hopes placed in it. The French doctoral thesis has become a masterpiece of positivism which opens the door to professorships and is regarded in other countries as an illustration of the vigour of the French school of

Still from *La Chanson de Roland* (1977; "The Song of Roland"), a film by Franck Cassenti on the deeds of the medieval French epic hero.

historiography. The continual increase in staff since 1880 has probably been another factor which has led to the healthy situation of history in France in this century.

However, this constant progression masks the serious difficulties experienced by teachers. If a textbook helped France to win the 1914-1918 war, primary-school teachers between 1919 and 1939 were horrified by the spread of jingoism and became ardent pacifists. Then again, the often naive cult of the Revolution and the caricaturing of the *ancien régime* have long provoked the anger of the Catholics, particularly in western France. Although secondary education experienced a kind of golden age until 1945, the massive influx of young people into the lycées and colleges called into question the task assigned to history teachers by the bourgeois Republic—the training of elites—and replaced it with responsibility for educating the nation, which it is not always easy to discharge.

Furthermore, in the late 1950s many teachers became critical of an approach to history teaching which they considered to be rigid and outmoded, and endeavoured to introduce into the schools the "new history", largely dominated by economic and social factors, which was being developed within the university system by the members of the editorial board of the journal *Annales*. This journal, founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, sought to take by storm the positivist New Sorbonne, which gave pride of place to political and military events, and to replace the traditional "battle-oriented history" by a "problem-oriented history" open to the fertile methods of the new human and social sciences: anthropology, sociology, ethnology, economics and linguistics.

Thanks to the efforts of Fernand Braudel (see page 16), in the early 1960s the university yielded to the "Ecole des Annales". But for the profession as a whole, this success soon looked like a pyrrhic victory. After 1969 the teaching of history, labelled a "general cultural subject" in primary education, became virtually moribund. Ten years later, the attempt to introduce into secondary education a theme-oriented history which had little concern for chronology plunged teachers and parents into confusion. At university level history at the end of the 1960s seemed in danger of becoming an appendage of the social sciences, and particularly of sociology, dominated at that time by Marxism and structuralism.

Twenty years on, history has made a spectacular recovery. A vigorous press campaign conducted by the gifted journalist and historian Alain Decaux, who has become a kind of schoolteacher to the nation through his presentation of historical events on television, has enabled the teaching of history at primary level to regain its soul. In secondary education, the errors resulting from certain reforms have been effaced. Last but not least, the "history of mentalities" has taken over from a jaded form of economic history and, returning to the spirit of Michelet's pioneering intuitions, has given a new lease of life to the "Ecole des Annales". Whereas the social and human sciences, after ruling supreme, are now in a state of crisis, history, which has struck a delicate balance between tradition and modernity, seems to be in sound condition. Historians, who only yesterday were cooped up in libraries and archives, have become media figures. In a society that is stepping into the future while looking back at the past, they cater to an interest in historical roots and the archaeological heritage. They will never be done with teaching, rewriting and reinterpreting—sometimes in the midst of sound and fury—the history of France and the French. ■

Detail from a mural by François Flameng (1856-1923) at the Sorbonne, Paris, depicting 19th-century French historians. From left to right, Edgar Quinet, Abel François Villemain, François Guizot, Jules Michelet, Victor Cousin and Ernest Renan.

worlds ancient and modern

India, cradle of an ancient civilization, and the United States of America, a continent "without a past" but with a strong imported Puritan tradition, represent two diametrically opposed temporal and historical worlds. Between the two extremes lies a whole gamut of intermediates. Common to all is the historical quest summed up in Fernand Braudel's dictum: "The price of nationhood is an unceasing search for national identity."

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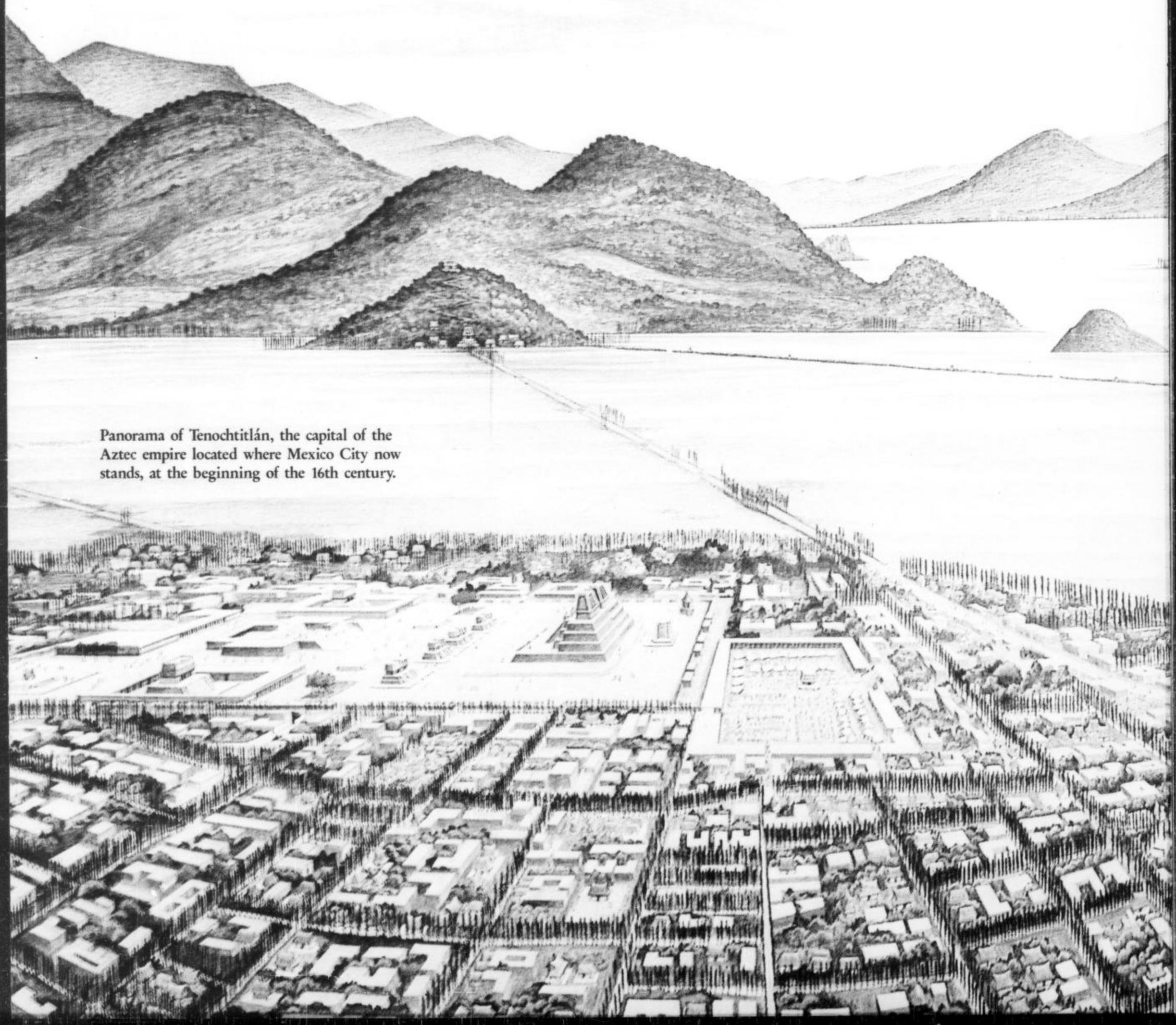

Panorama of Tenochtitlán, the capital of the Aztec empire located where Mexico City now stands, at the beginning of the 16th century.

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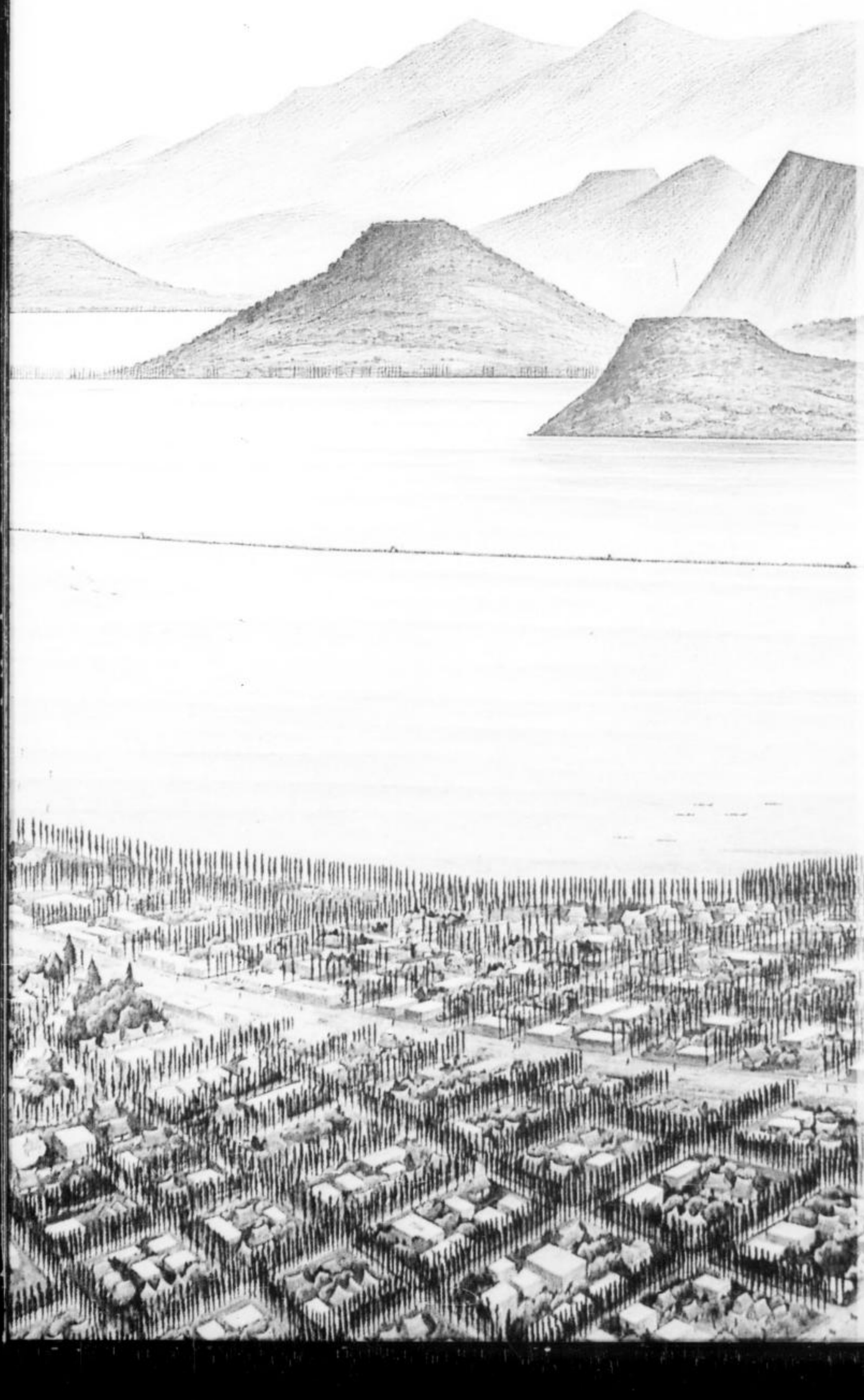
FROM THE EPIC TO SCIENTIFIC HISTORY

BY CLAUDE MARKOVITS

Sculpted heads of the late Gupta period (5th-6th century AD), from Akhnur, near Jammu (Kashmir).



DOES India have a history? This question has always troubled historians, especially in relation to the long period extending from the Aryan invasions to the arrival of the Muslims in the twelfth century. There are two kinds of source for this period, which saw the emergence and blossoming of Hindu civilization: normative texts such as the Vedas and epics on the one hand, and on the other, archaeological documents.

However, correlating the two presents insurmountable difficulties. Some scholars firmly deny the historical nature of the epics, which they believe to recount purely mythical events without any historical foundation. They point to the haziness of the scattered geographical references which the epics contain and to the great uncertainty about when they were composed. Another school of Indian scholars believes that the findings of certain recent excavations confirm the historicity of the events related in the epics.

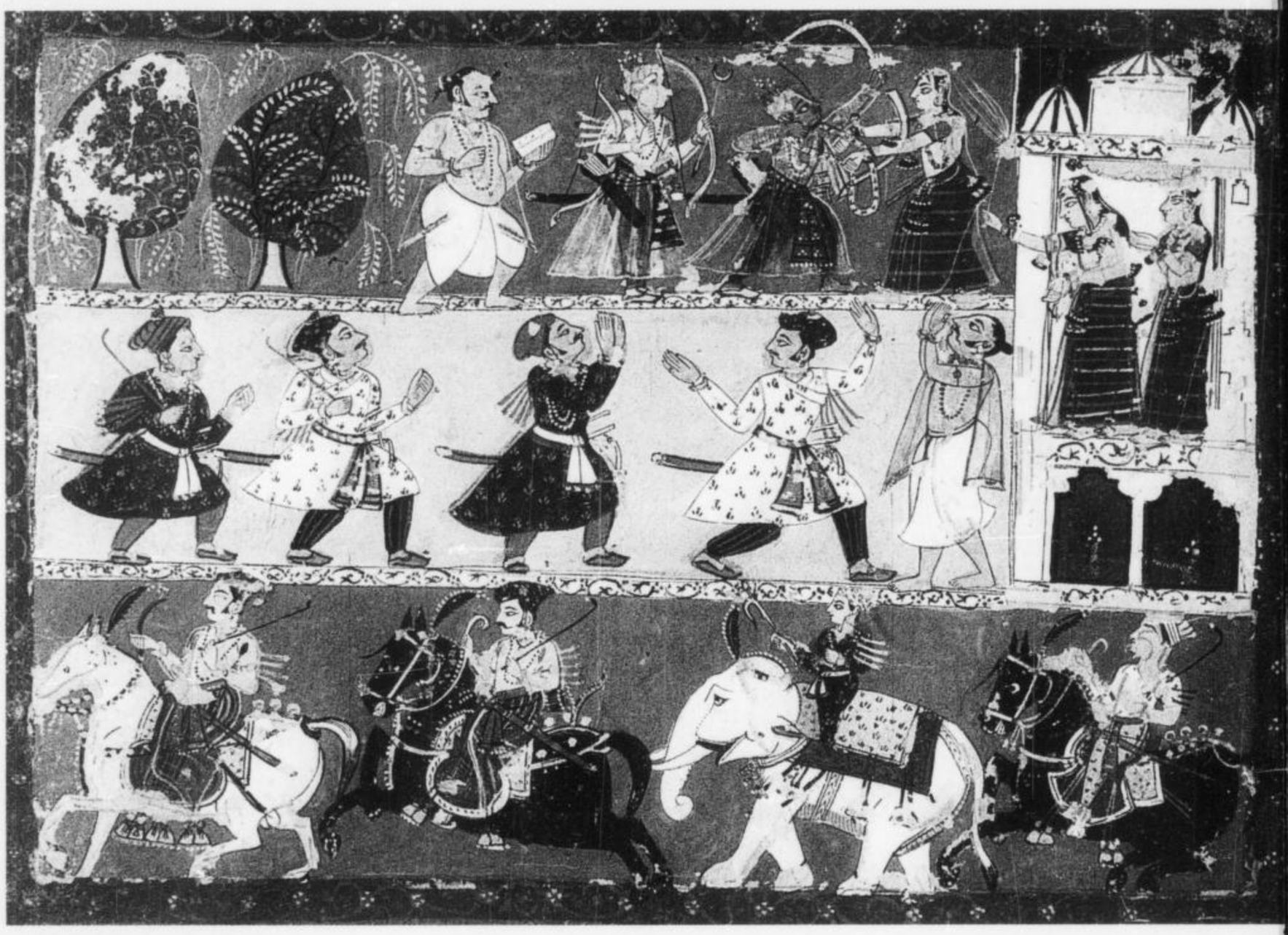
In fact the quarrel is a philosophical one. Long ago Hegel proclaimed the non-historical character of Indian civilization. Stressing that the "time which elapsed before the appearance of written history...was without objective history because it had left no subjective history or historical account", he drew attention to the contrast between India, "this country so rich in profound spiritual achievements", and China, which "possessed an outstanding history, going back to the most remote times".

The lack of ancient Indian historical writings is undeniable. With the exception of the Kashmir chronicle, there is no text of a historical nature prior to the Muslim conquest. Starting in the late twelfth century, historical texts were written to the glory of the Muslim sovereigns. The most illustrious representative of this school of writing was Ferishta, the historian of the Deccan. This imported genre, written in Persian, had only a limited influence.

Students of Indian civilization

The birth of would-be scientific historiography is linked to the British conquest of India, which began in 1757 and was all but over in 1818. But this form of writing was inherited from elsewhere and it was practised only by the colonizers, at least until around 1830.

Sir William Jones (1746-1794), who founded the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 1784, laid the



Scenes from the *Ramayana*, the great Sanskrit epic recounting the heroic deeds of prince Rama. Malwa school painting, 17th century.

Copper plaque inscribed with Brahmi characters, issued by king Salankayana Nandivarman II (4th century AD). From Pedda Vegi (Andhra Pradesh).

A prince pays homage to Babur (1483-1530), the first Mughal ruler of India. Late 16th-century miniature.

CLAUDE MARKOVITS, of France, is director of research at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris. He is the author of *Indian Business and Nationalist Policies, 1931-39: The Indigenous Capitalist Class and the Rise of the Congress Party* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

foundations for a chronology of ancient India. Most of the members of the Society belonged to the British ruling elite. Whether judges or administrators, their curiosity about India and things Indian was not entirely innocent. Getting to know the country better might help them to control it more effectively. But they were also men of the Enlightenment and they wanted to learn about one of the great civilizations of humanity. They admired the culture of ancient India, but considered it inferior to that of classical Greece, which was a model of perfection for Europeans at that time.

The most violent attack against the civilization of India was launched by James Mill (1773-1836), a prominent representative of Utilitarianism or "philosophical radicalism" and father of the famous John Stuart Mill. His *History of British India* (1817), the earliest attempt to arrive at an overview of Indian history, attracted wide attention and exercised considerable influence.

A senior official of the East India Company stationed in London, Mill never set foot in India and worked from secondary sources. Contemptuous of facts, he regarded history as a branch of philosophy and poked fun at the gullibility of the "orientalists". The ancient Hindu writings? Pure fabrication having no value as a historical source—an attitude still held today by certain Indologists. India before the Muslim conquest? A monotonous succession of despots, each more barbaric than the last, whose authority was buttressed by the most enormous and most frightful superstition. The Muslim era? Barely a step away from the dark ages of Hinduism. The history of India really began when the Europeans arrived, especially the British.

Mill did not contribute anything to historical

research on India, but he influenced generations of historians. His division of Indian history into three periods—ancient (Hindu), medieval (Muslim) and modern (British)—although long superseded, still survives in textbooks. Through his attacks on the orientalists, he was also instrumental in focusing historical studies on the modern age. Earlier periods were studied by a small circle of specialists.

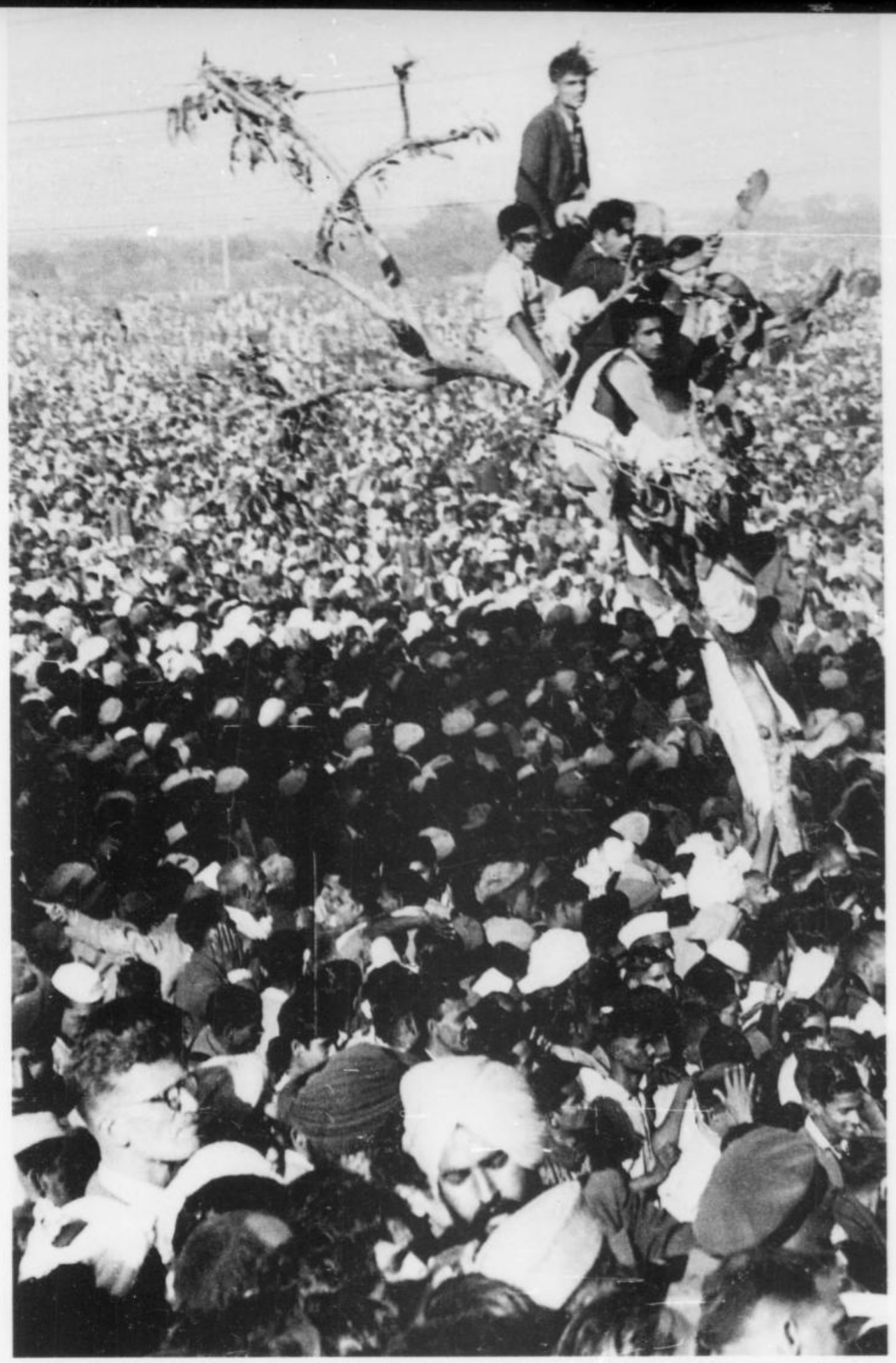
As a result, such important discoveries as the deciphering of Brahmi script in 1833 by James Prinsep (1799-1840) aroused little interest. There was a gulf between the research of the orientalists and historical works in which British authors concerned themselves mainly with the history of their compatriots in India.

Mountstuart Elphinstone (1799-1859), who knew India at first hand and had an openminded attitude towards Indian culture, broke new ground. In his *History of Hindu and Muhammedan India* (1841) he provided the first plausible comprehensive chronology for ancient India—the main lines of which still remain valid today—and for the first time included southern India, which had until then been neglected.

The awakening of a national consciousness

The following period marked both the zenith of the imperialist school of history and the beginnings of a nationalist Indian historiography. The first indigenous historians, such as Raja Sivaprasad, author of the *Itihas Timir Nasak* (1866), written in Hindi and used as a school textbook in northern India, judged their own society very harshly.

In the 1870s, however, an anti-Western movement began to take shape, especially in Maharashtra. Intellectuals, whether writers or pamphleteers, who took their cue from the rise of nationalism in Europe, bewailed the lack of a national historiographic tradition. The great Bengali writer Bankimcandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) used the form of the historical novel to glorify the Hindu past of Bengal. The question of the relations between Hindus and Muslims was already influencing the writing of history.



Vast crowds turned out for the funeral of Gandhi in 1948.

The great "durbar" (formal reception) held in Delhi in 1903. Illustration from a contemporary French newspaper.

The nationalist school of history began to come into its own around 1910. A growing number of its members belonged to the expanding academic community. H.C. Raychaudhuri, K.P. Jayaswal, R.K. Mookerji and H.C. Ojha were interested in ancient India. They endeavoured to combat the Hegelian view of a non-historic India by studying, in particular, the development of political institutions. Even though their work does not always meet the scientific criteria of history as it is understood today, their role in the awakening of an Indian national consciousness is not negligible.

The greatest Indian historian of India, Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958), is known mainly for his work on the end of the Mughal period and the Marathas. His writings, which are in a vivid style and show immense erudition, are still widely read.

Since the 1960s Indian historiography has drawn nearer to the other social sciences. Major controversies are regularly generated by historical studies. This effervescence attests to the vitality of historical studies in a country that clearly intends to make its own distinctive contribution to the history of humanity. ■

INDONESIA

PULLING TOGETHER THE STRANDS OF TIME

BY DENYS LOMBARD

Temple at Besakih, Bali.

In the Indonesian Archipelago, it was not until the spread of Islam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the idea of time as Promethean, linear, directional and evenly distributed (in Malay *waktu*, from the Arabic *wakt)* gradually began to win at least partial acceptance.

Today two different and parallel concepts of time exist in this region. On the one hand there is historical time, references to which can be found as early as the seventeenth century in certain Malay treatises which mention dated events and, above all, the collective destiny of the Muslim community. This homogeneous, neutral time is punctuated solely by the major festivals of Islam. On the other hand there is a non-historical, immobile time in which the days are distributed according to a traditional system of classification, still greatly in evidence in Java and Bali. Each moment, far from being neutral, is considered to have a particular density or "key signature" which can be discovered only by complicated calculations and which a person must know before undertaking any important action.

This duality is essential for understanding the way in which the idea of history *(sejarah)* has developed. For simplicity's sake, it can be said that the first conception of time gave rise to the *hikayat* or Malay stories and that from the second derived the *babad* or Javanese chronicles.

The Dutch settlers made two positive contributions to the civilization of the region. They brought with them, first, the idea of directional time, which could not but reinforce the concept of time in evidence in the *hikayat,* and, secondly, a partiality for the systematic study of texts. However, their outlook was inevitably tainted by Eurocentrism. *Oud en Nieuw Oostindien,* written at the beginning of the eighteenth century by a pastor, François Valentyn, recounted the history of the Archipelago and Asia on the basis of

Batavian chronicles and the fortunes of the Dutch East India Company. This dual approach, rooted in both scientific respect for documents and the unconscious cynicism of the European settler, became ever more marked in the following centuries.

A passion for philological enquiry underlay the search for Malay, Javanese, Balinese, Buginese and other manuscripts, the study of inscriptions on stone and copper, and interest in the monuments of the Indo-Javanese past generally.

However, Eurocentrism lay at the heart of most of the synoptic studies that came out at around the same time and which focused on the periods of Indianization and of the Batavian conquest. Two major themes emerged which were to complement one another. The first was the importance of Indian influence, which was confined to Java and Bali but was essentially beneficial and led to the creation of great kingdoms, such as Majapahit in Java, in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries and to the development of a fascinating classical art. The second major theme was the central role of the Dutch East India Company, which achieved single-handed the feat of bringing together the scattered islands of the Archipelago into one large political unit.

The role of the coastal sultanates in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries was systematically ignored and if Islam was mentioned it was in order to denounce its baneful effects.

The reaction of the first nationalists

The early nationalists tried to turn European intellectual weapons against the Europeans. They soon realized how useful it would be to recover the glorious past which the philologists had restored to them. However, they had a great deal to do before shaping the national history which they needed and founding the independent state of their dreams. The idea of a common historical destiny was far from being universally accepted. Nor did the material they found in Dutch textbooks always make their task easier.

The first signs of the new climate of opinion appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in Java. This awareness of the cultural heritage was expressed even more clearly by the members of the *Budi Utomo,* an association founded in 1908 by a small group of Javanese wishing to revive their traditions. In 1911 Doctor Radjiman, a native of Yogya who had played an active part in the launching of this movement, declared before a Dutch audience that there could be no question of Westernizing the Javanese: "If the indigenous people are torn from their past they will become rootless misfits, lost between two civilizations."

The issues were spelt out in 1935 in a debate triggered by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, who rejected all nostalgia for the past and thought that the first priority was to try to imitate the West in order to catch up. Professor Purbatjaraka, a native of Surakarta, who had been one of the first to take over the philological method introduced by the Dutch, insisted more than anyone else on the importance of the past: "Only when we are familiar with the course of our history from the earliest times shall we be able to organize our future properly."

Sanusi Pane went even further. Born in Sumatra but strongly attracted to Javanese culture, the man who was to write the first history of Indonesia (1943-1945) criticized Sutan Takdir's craving for novelty and praised the sage Arjuna, the hero of the *Mahabharata* whose preference was for spiritual values, unlike the Westerners' Faust, who did not flinch from selling his soul for material gain.

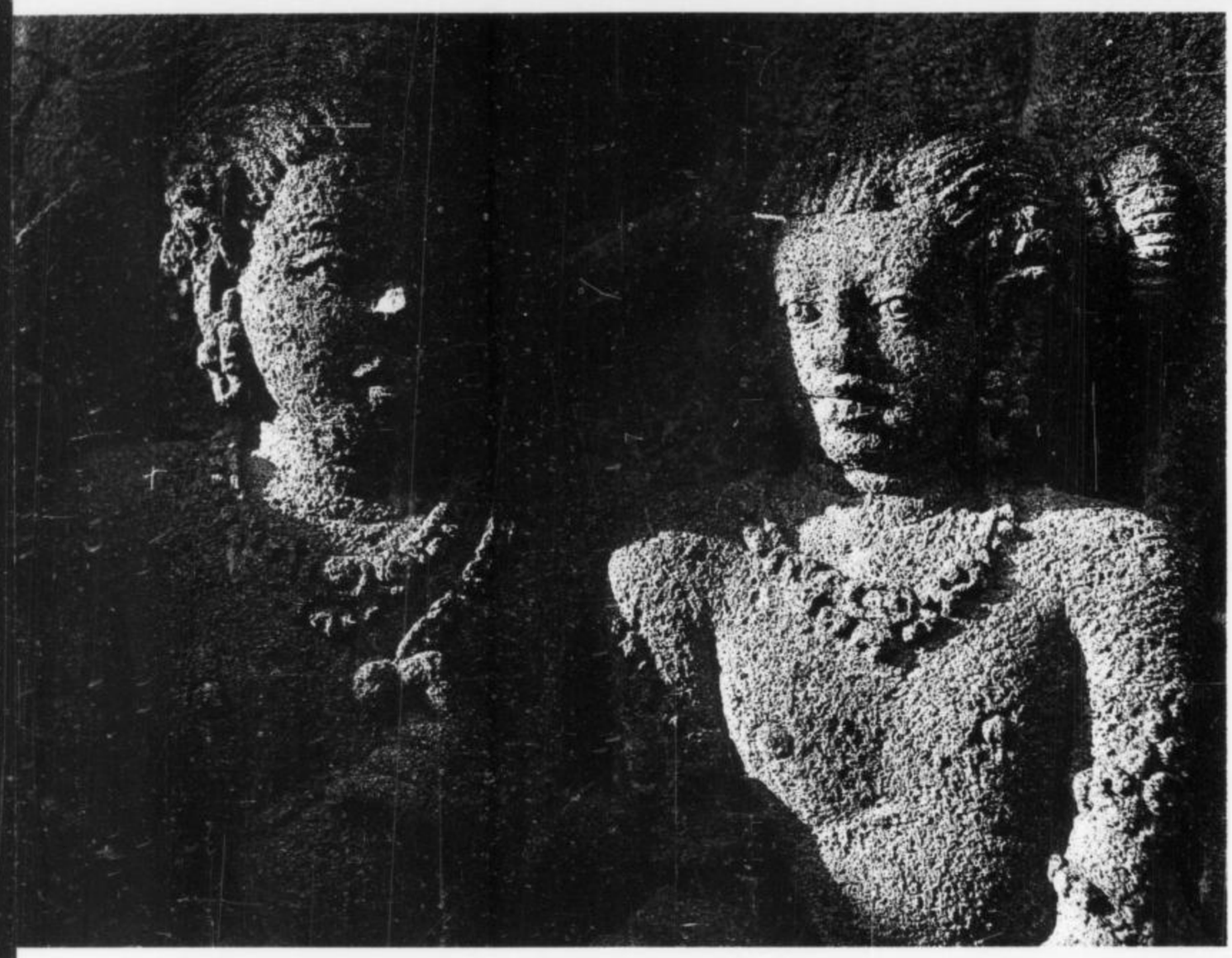
A thinker who became acutely aware of the problem was the Javanese Suwardi Surjaningrat, better known by the name of Ki Hadjar Dewantara (1889-1959). "We live," he wrote in 1929, "like the clients of a hotel belonging to others, who seek neither to improve nor to equip the house in which they live, because they do not feel that it is theirs." Dismayed by this passivity, he wished first to restore to his contemporaries their dignity and their identity. He was not automatically hostile to the West but thought that no association was possible unless the Indonesians could define their cultural identity.

The Dutch East India Company fleet in the bay of Batavia (now Jakarta), capital of the Dutch East Indies. In foreground, a merchant and his wife. Painting by Aelbert Cuyp (1620-1691).

History during the Sukarno period

In view of the importance that these nationalists attached to cultural identity *(kepribadian),* it may seem surprising that the Sukarno period did not produce a truly national history. Sukarno (Indonesian president from 1949 to 1966) was fond of repeating that "history must not be forgotten under any pretext", but the efforts made at the time to write a general history foundered on account of numerous differences of opinion.

DENYS LOMBARD,
French historian, is director of studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. A specialist on the Indian Archipelago and co-editor of the interdisciplinary review *Archipel,* he is the author of studies on the sultanate of Aceh in Sumatra (1967) and on the history of Java (3 volumes, forthcoming).



Detail from a bas-relief in the vast temple complex at Prambanan, one of the finest examples of central Javanese art (late 9th-early 10th century).

Fascination with Javanese history is the most striking feature of Muhammad Yamin's voluminous works, which sometimes give the impression of having been written by an official historian. As early as 1945 Yamin wrote an essay about Gajah Mada, who was chief minister of the fourteenth-century King Hayam Wuruk and reunited Indonesian lands around Java and its then centre, Majapahit. Above all, he sought to use the findings of epigraphy or philology to stimulate the pride of his compatriots and justify the political demands of his government.

Meanwhile, recent victims of arbitrary Dutch rule and those who had stood up against the East India Company were granted the status of local or national heroes *(pahlawan).* Many streets were named after them. This was a widespread phenomenon. In Java and elsewhere each region honoured its heroes. Their biographies were written, they were depicted in imagery, the real or assumed graves of some of them were restored and became places of pilgrimage. In 1959 the authorities drew up an official list of national heroes.

In addition to this vast hagiographic undertaking, ideologists considered to be progressive were recreating history. A more searching historical analysis, the first outlines of a social history, might have been expected from these intellectuals who purported to be Marxists. The *Madilog* (acronym of *Materialisme-Dialektika-Logika),* written by Tan Malaka in 1942-1943, shortly after his return from exile, and representing the first dialectical approach to Indonesian history, with its simple not to say simplistic division into periods, has more in common with utopianism than with Marxist analysis.

Less poetic but historically more reliable in the sense that it contains precise references to epigraphy and Javanese chronicles is D.N. Aidit's "Indonesian Society and Indonesian Revolution", a textbook written in 1957 for the schools of the Communist Party. It none the less appears to be no more than window-dressing for ideas imported from the West. The Marxist tool, instead of prompting a profound analysis of society and inspiring an original approach to periodization—highlighting for instance the expansion of trade in the sultanates in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, or the development of the economy of the plantations in the nineteenth century—loses its fine edge when applied to colonial chronology and merely serves to rename the different stages.

History and the New Order: from 1966 to the present

President Suharto's New Order made an effort to learn from the historical methods developed in the West. The old idea of a national history was revived and the groundwork was carefully laid through numerous seminars for the preparation of the six-volume textbook which eventually appeared in 1975. The following breakdown into periods was adopted and announced at a seminar held in Yogyakarta in August 1970: prehistory, the Indianization period, the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries, the nineteenth century, 1900-1942, post-1942. One virtue of such a time-division, debatable though it may be in other respects, is that it integrates into the history of the nation prehistory and protohistory, which are regarded as essential formative periods before Indianization. It also recognizes the importance of the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which is no longer considered to be purely colonial but to have been strongly marked by Islam and the formation of the sultanates.

Indonesian historiography then underwent a distinct change. Regional history was taken into account, and a series of local seminars were organized in order to secure the collaboration of scholars in the provinces and to bring them into contact with historians. The latter also became more open to archaeology, although archaeology and history were still taught separately at the university. The hagiographical tone was somewhat tempered by exposure to the facts. A comparative history of South Asia slowly emerged which held out promise in so far as it allowed nationalistic prejudices to be overcome.

Institutions which had previously taken little interest in their history have now adopted a historical perspective. Among them are the army, which now has its own history department and museums, the Protestant and Catholic Churches, and the state Islamic Institutes, which have begun preparing a history of Indonesia from the Muslim point of view. The old practice of hagiography still looms large, but these recent developments are leading to consciousness of a linear history and form part of a slow progression towards what I have called historical time. ■

MEXICO

HISTORY OR DESTINY?

BY MIGUEL LEÓN-PORTILLA

MEXICANS have always exhibited an obstinate determination to safeguard the memory of the major events that have marked their society and this has coloured the way in which they view their identity and destiny. From pre-Columbian times they have been engaged in a continuous battle to save their history from oblivion. Knowledge of the past was the foundation on which their priests and diviners based their astronomic calculations and their predictions of the future. Countless archaeological remains from the two thousand years before the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519 bear witness to the Mexican desire to interpret and record the history of gods and man. The stelae known as *danzantes* ("dancers") at Monte Albán in the Oaxaca valley, on which are inscribed a record of the passing days and years, place-names and the names of kings and other notables, constitute the oldest known chronicle (600 to 300 BC) of the New World.

The people, or rather peoples, who succeeded one another on Mexican soil met with mixed fortunes. Bursts of creativity were punctuated by times of crisis and war which even led to the abrupt disappearance of entire populations and civilizations. The memory of these events lives on in the thousands of inscriptions and the legends of oral tradition.

The greatest and most tragic clash of cultures in pre-Columbian civilization was recorded by some of those who took part in the conquest of Mexico. Hernán Cortés himself sent five remarkable letters *(Cartas de Relación)* back to Spain between 1519 and 1526; and the soldier-chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo (c. 1492-1580), who served under Cortés, fifty years after the event wrote his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la*

Two of the *danzantes* ("dancers") stelae carved in Olmec style, c. 300 BC. Pre-Columbian city of Monte Albán, Mexico.

Nueva Espana ("True History of the Conquest of New Spain"). The vanquished peoples also left written records. A manuscript dated 1528, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, recounts in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, the traumatic fate of the Indians:

All this happened literally before our eyes; we were aghast and filled with anguish at the piteous fate which was ours. Broken spears lay strewn about the ground, men on horseback were everywhere, our houses were roofless and their walls were red [*with blood*]. *The water was red also, as if it had been dyed, and when we drank it, it had a brackish taste. We beat our fists against the mud walls at the sight of our heritage lying in tatters. We sought protection behind our shields but no shield could protect us in our isolation...*

The beginning of a new history

This evocation of the tragic fall of the ancient capital of Mexico contrasts with Bernal Díaz' equally astonishing description of the city as it appeared to the conquistadors on their arrival:

We saw the three causeways that led into Mexico... We saw the fresh water which came from Chapultepec to supply the city.... We saw too that one could not pass from one house to another of that great city and the other cities that were built on the water except over wooden drawbridges.... We saw cues *and shrines in these cities that looked like gleaming white towers and castles: a marvellous sight.... We turned back to the great market and the swarm of people buying and selling.... Some of our soldiers who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople, in Rome, and all over Italy, said that they had never seen a market so well laid out, so large, so orderly, and so full of people.**

These accounts, from the vanquished and the victorious, record the passing of ancient splendours and herald the emergence of a new destiny. How then can Mexicans, as they search for their identity, ignore the shock of this encounter between two peoples, which gave rise to so much discord yet from which their mixed culture was born?

There are hundreds of chronicles of "New Spain", covering three centuries of history. Their authors wished to record the upheavals they were witnessing. In the sixteenth century an extraordinary man, the Spanish Franciscan Bernardino de Sahagún, assisted by Indians old enough to have lived through the Spanish conquest or young enough to be his disciples, gathered invaluable, first-hand information on the pre-Columbian era. Meanwhile, indigenous chroniclers such as Tezozómoc and Chimalpahin were writing in their own languages—Nahuatl, Aztec, Yucatán Maya—in order to preserve their history.

A Mexican identity was gradually emerging, but those who were trying to define it were faced with a mass of contradictions. Some felt that the ancient pre-Columbian heritage was dead and gone. Others foresaw a glorious destiny for "New Spain". At the same time, more and more newcomers—African slaves, Spaniards from all walks of life, adventurers from other countries of the Old World—were mingling with the descendants of the Aztec, Olmec, Maya, Zapotec and other peoples.

Reasserting Mexican identity

As time went by, the feeling grew that traditional chronicles should be replaced by a more rigorous historiography which would help the Mexicans grasp their identity and learn from the past in order to prepare for the future. An outstanding example of the new methodology was the *Historia antigua de México* ("History of Ancient Mexico") by a Mexican Jesuit, Francisco Xavier Clavijero (1731-1787), which was so popular that it was immediately translated into several languages. This was the first cultural history of the country before the Spanish conquest. The author emphasized the importance of accepting their ancient heritage as the only means by which Mexicans could come to terms with themselves in order to face the great changes in store.

Clavijero's foresight was soon borne out by events. Mexico gained its independence in 1821. Some of those who fought for independence recorded their views on what the revolution meant to them as a harbinger of major political, social, economic and religious change.

The contradictions in Mexican historiography thus reflect the different aims of historians. Liberals fought to strengthen republican institutions, while traditionalists, looking to the past, dreamed of a monarchical system. Historians

Zapatistas (1931; "Followers of Zapata"), a painting by the Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949).

* Quotation from *The Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Díaz, translated by J.M. Cohen. Penguin Classics, 1963.

Detail from "Cortés arriving at Vera Cruz in 1519", one of a series of frescos by the Mexican painter Diego Rivera (1886-1957) illustrating the Spanish conquest of the New World. National Palace, Mexico City.

studying the struggles of the new nation attempted to resolve the great issues at stake and to explain the more tragic episodes.

In 1847-1848 Mexico went to war with the United States and lost half of its territory. Internal conflicts in the following years conjured up the fleeting dream of a new empire, culminating in the dramatic confrontation between Maximilian, crowned emperor of Mexico with the support of France, and Benito Juárez, backed by the Mexican people. The history of this era, sometimes written in blood, again raised the tormenting questions: who were we, who are we now, and what will become of us?

Historiography in modern Mexico

The most recent convulsion in Mexican history was the revolution of 1910. The names of its leading figures have become legendary: Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, Venustiano Carranza, Pancho Villa.... The revolution heightened the Mexican sense of identity and purpose, and was expressed not only in politics but in the visual arts, literature and music, as well as in history and anthropology. From the 1920s onwards the great muralist painters—Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros—took inspiration for their frescos from both past and present. At the same time a new generation of historians, sociologists and anthropologists, better educated and professionally trained, were concentrating on the obsessive theme of the identity and destiny of Mexico.

Historical research on Mexico today, whether carried out by Mexicans or others, represents a variety of schools of thought and ideologies. Even if nationalist tendencies are, at times, apparent, the highly professional quality of the work of these historians has to be recognized. The three main stages in the history of Mexico—its pre-Columbian roots, the mixing of cultures and its existence as an independent country—are currently being studied in depth. Although the main research centres are in the capital, work is also being carried out in the most remote regions of the country. The expansion of historiography is part of a general movement in which historians have extended their interest beyond the specifically Mexican field.

Faithful to the spirit of their Indian ancestors, modern Mexicans feel that a people which reflects on its historical identity comes to understand the meaning of the present and is better equipped to face the future. ■

MIGUEL LEÓN-PORTILLA, of Mexico, is currently serving as his country's ambassador and permanent delegate to Unesco. Professor emeritus at the Autonomous National University of Mexico, he is the author of a number of books, articles and papers on pre-Columbian cultures, which have been translated into several languages.

UNITED STATES

A PARTICULAR VIEW OF AMERICA

BY OLIVIER ZUNZ

It has often been observed that Americans experience their history as if it had been mapped out in advance, as if the future were only an opportunity to improve institutions that are already solidly established. The key idea, rooted deep in the nation's consciousness, is the exceptional nature of the American experience. As the orator and politician Daniel Webster put it, addressing the House of Representatives in 1826:

"Whatsoever European experience has developed, favourable to the freedom and happiness of man; whatsoever European genius has invented for his improvement or gratification; whatsoever of refinement or polish the culture of European society presents for his adoption or enjoyment, all this is offered to man in America, with the additional advantages of the full power of erecting forms of Government on free and simple principles, without overturning institutions suited to times long past, but too strongly supported either by interests or prejudices, to be shaken without convulsions."

American historians still continue to highlight the factors that make their history so exceptional. In this they are pursuing the endless debate on the respective roles of consensus and conflict, on what unites Americans and what keeps them apart.

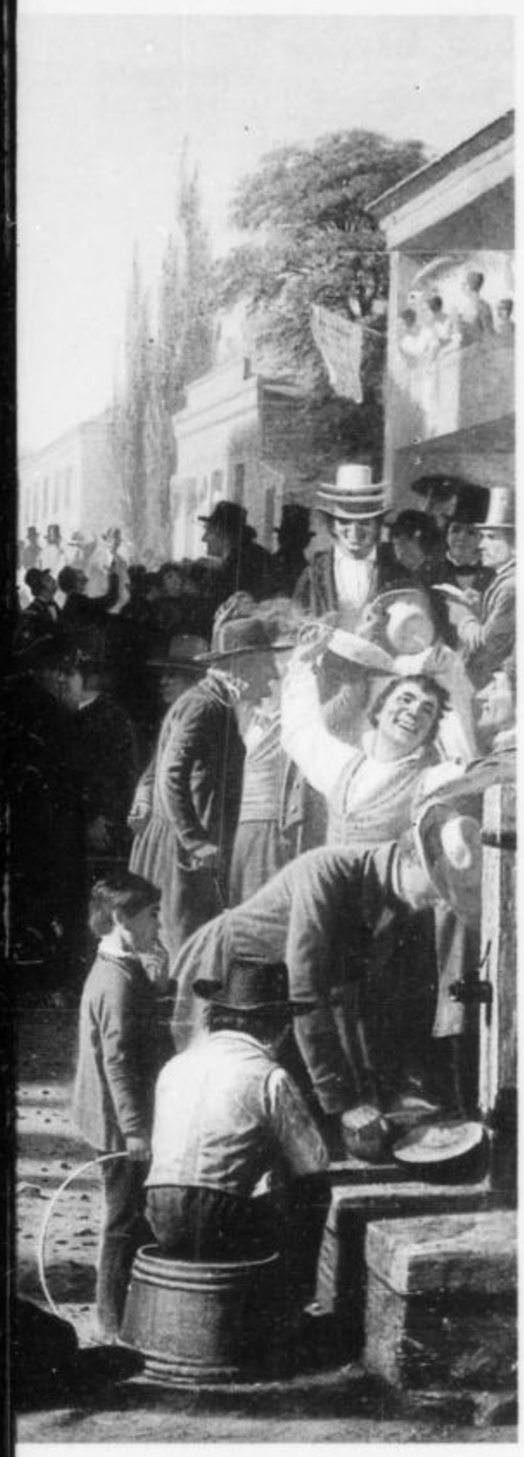
The progressive historians of the early years of the century set out, in a way, to "democratize" the country's history. They disputed the traditional acceptance of the American consensus and instead stressed the dynamics of domestic conflicts. Frederick Jackson Turner, for example, considered that the American character was born of the strained relations between the seaboard and the frontier, while for Arthur M. Schlesinger the tensions were between city and countryside, and for Charles Beard they were between social classes.

But the generation of historians writing after the Second World War turned back to the issue of consensus. The historians of the 1950s rediscovered Alexis de Tocqueville, the author of *Democracy in America* (1835-1840), and tried to define the forces uniting Americans. Louis Hartz, for example, replied to the German historical economist Werner Sombart's celebrated question as to why there was no socialism in the United States by drawing attention to the lack of long-standing feudal constraints, the virtual absence of class as a motive force in the new nation, and hence the flexibility of a social system that was both open and unifying.

The historians of the last twenty years, dissatisfied with these generalizations which in their view are too theoretical, have been intent on exploring as many real-life situations as possible. With the broadening of the scope of history as a discipline, the concept of national character has for the moment lost its explanatory value, while new areas of research such as the history of the family and of labour, or urban history, have made it possible to dispense with a unifying link. The contrast between consensus and conflict now seems to be too simple. The national framework has become inadequate for grasping such major issues as the economy of the slave trade, migration patterns or the development of industrial capitalism. But key ideas do not die all that easily. and this concept of the national character, as amended, is enjoying a fresh lease of life. The concept is deeply rooted in American life, but where did it come from?

The first Puritan settlers left an indelible mark on American history. Their new country was supposed to set an example to the Old World of a better society, destined by Providence to serve

Above, *Verdict of the People* (1855), a painting by George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879) which evokes the festive air of the early American voting tradition.



Below, picking cotton on a Mississippi plantation. Nineteenth-century American engraving based on a painting by W.A. Walker.

as a model for other nations. That was the mission of the American people, as evoked by the famous declaration made in 1630 by John Winthrop, one of the chief figures among the Puritan founders of New England: "Men shall say of succeeding plantations: the Lord make it like that of New England: for we shall be as a City set upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."

The ideal of a self-sufficient egalitarian Puritan community, centred on religious life and governed by collective decision-making, may well never have been fulfilled, not even during the first generation. Nevertheless, the role of the "community" in American life was spelt out from the outset and served as a reference for following generations.

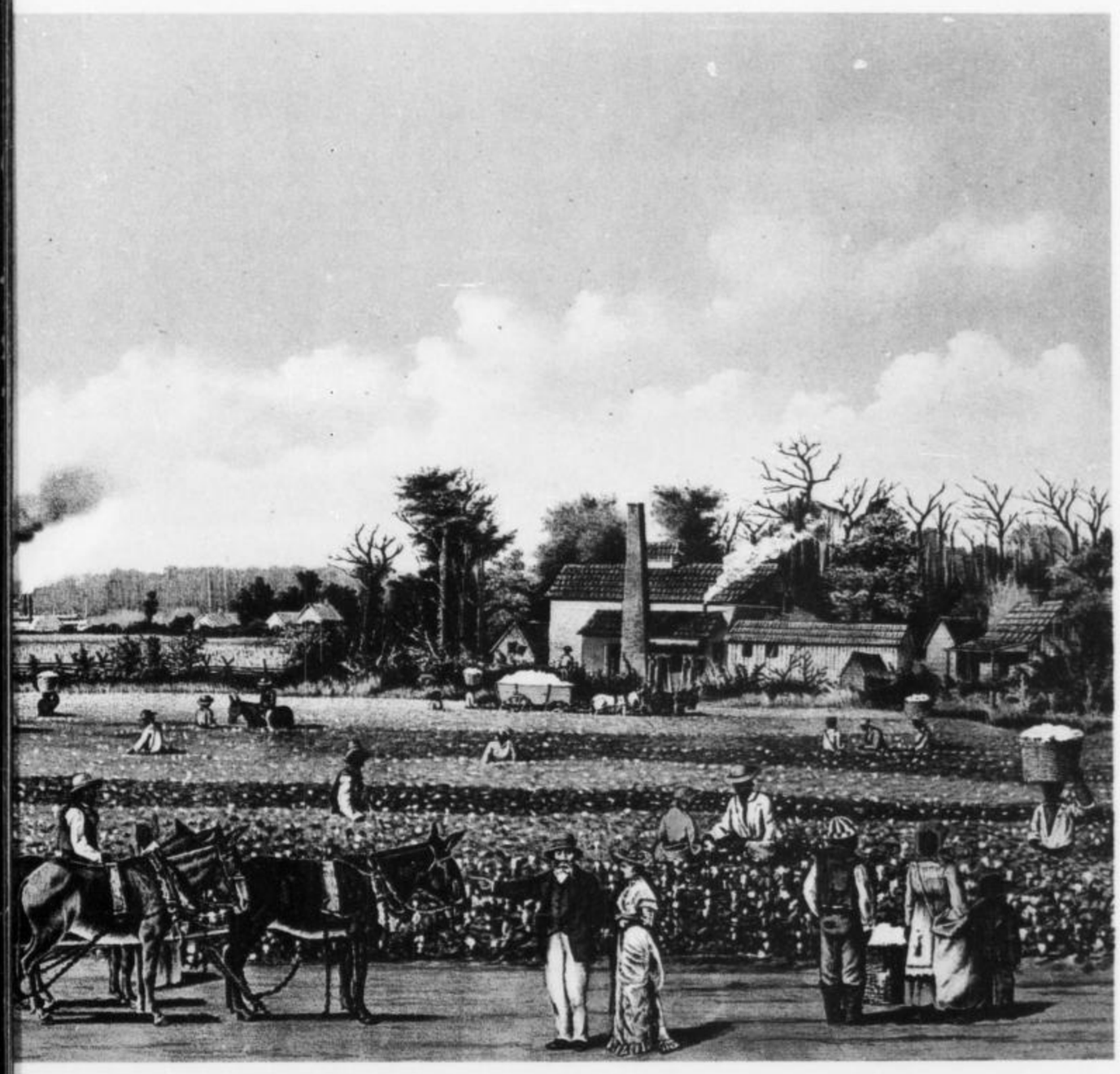
In colonial America, two ideological and social worlds existed side by side and sometimes merged—that of the Puritan and that of the Yankee, born of the challenge which the conquest of a new territory represented. In New England, the egalitarian settler villages contrasted with the trading ports where moral principles were constantly eroded as social barriers grew up. Settlements on the frontier itself were dominated by a handful of businessmen, such as John Pynchon in Springfield or the Willards of the Merrimack Valley, who were more concerned with acquiring land and gaining ready access to markets than with seemly behaviour and religious observance.

In the South, of course, the plantation economy soon superseded the modest smallholdings of the original settlers. The republican ideology of individualism was therefore quick to impose itself at the expense of community spirit. Well before blood flowed at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, at the beginning of the War of Independence, the Puritans had been turned into Yankees.

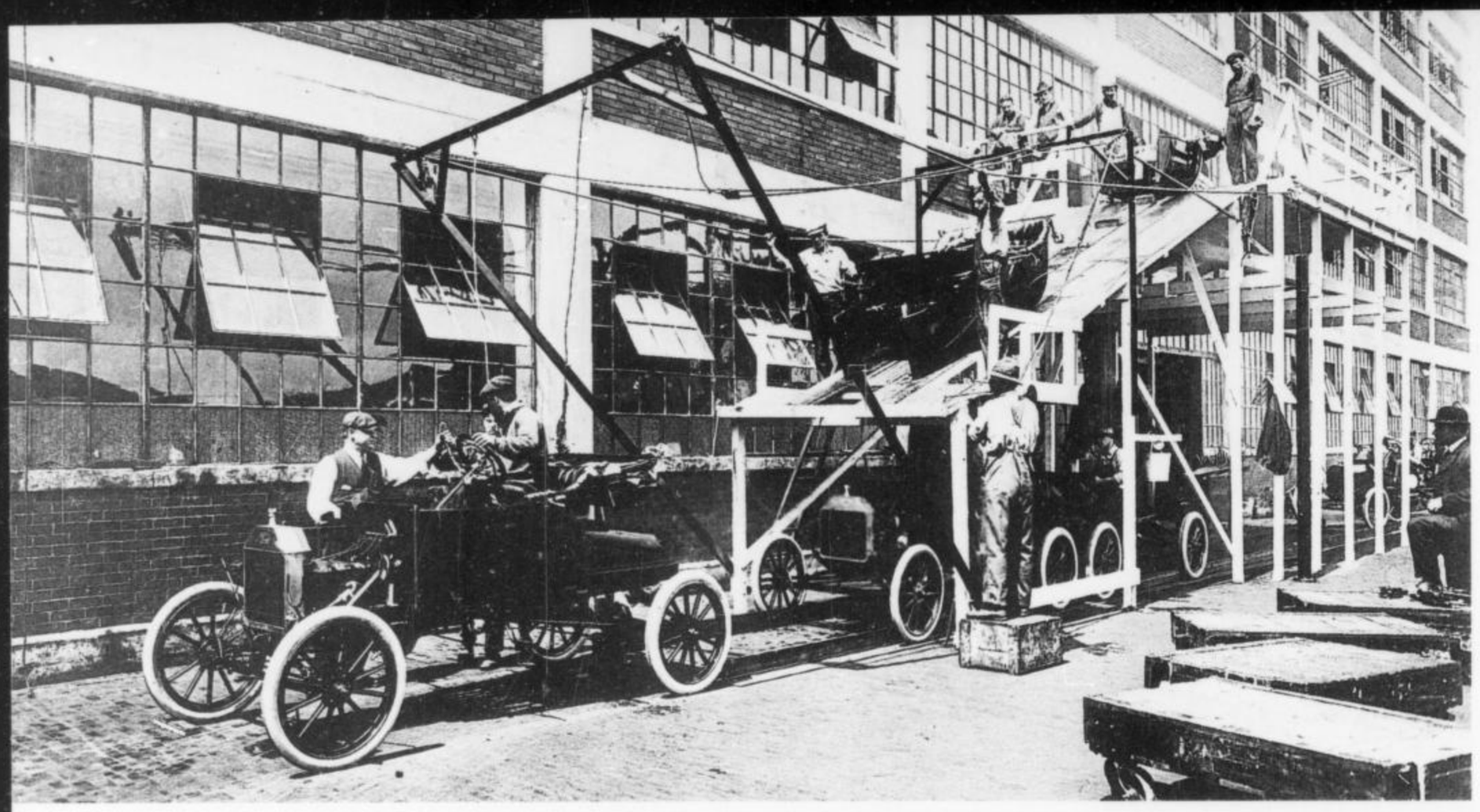
The revolution and the intellectual turmoil caused by the break with Britain once again prompted Americans to define where they stood politically, as can be seen from the legal and philosophical treatises of John Adams and the debates on the Constitution. Although Americans rejected the British system of government, they realized that they could only place their trust in an elite which had demonstrated its worth. In a crucial innovation they opted in favour of elected representatives, citizens who would be exposed to the possibility of corruption but who were expected to abide by certain rules and could, if necessary, be repudiated.

Once they had won their independence, the Americans continued to define their position by extending their territory beyond the Allegheny Mountains and by developing the economy, formerly geared solely to the Atlantic trade, towards the interior of the country. Thomas Jefferson was intent on creating a nation of independent rural landowners in the West: "Those who labour the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue."

The period when the pioneers rolled back the frontier contributed most to the formation of the national character, in the sense in which that term is usually understood: the practical and inventive side of the Jacksonian "common man", that "ordinary man" who was always ready with expedients, not very keen on the arts but skilled at



A wagon train of settlers crosses the Rocky Mountains, early 19th century.



One of the first automobile assembly lines at the Ford factory in Detroit (Michigan), 1913.

succeeding in whatever he undertook. Frontier Americans were sometimes rough-hewn, but they were productive, matter-of-fact, forward-looking and quick to help one another out. The quality of life in the new communities depended on a sense of belonging to institutions. Tocqueville found this quite amazing, commenting that: "Government does very little in England, and private individuals do a great deal; in America, government interference has virtually ceased, and everything is done by the joint efforts of individuals." Thus the frontier community did inherit something from its Puritan forebears.

The end of innocence

Was the United States in the mid-nineteenth century composed of many small, loosely linked communities, or of a few large groups, or had it become a homogeneous nation?

The war between the North and South is at the heart of any discussion of national character. Historians have now gone beyond the debate on whether the Civil War was inevitable and have recently begun to raise new aspects of the social and cultural history of the South in an attempt to understand the distinctive features of a civilization built on the master-slave relationship and the way in which the South kept up racial distinctions in defiance of all egalitarian principles. Political historians also have taken the conflict between North and South out of the context of the struggle for or against emancipation and set it in a wider struggle for American legitimacy, with each camp claiming the republican heritage as its own.

Reconstruction of the Union and the transition to an industrialized and bureaucratized urban nation engaging in worldwide conflicts have triggered off fresh debates on the end of American innocence and hence on the end of the exceptional nature of its history. The successive transformations of American society, and the severe blow dealt by the Great Depression, may sometimes have caused cracks in the edifice, but they have also helped to redefine and even in some cases to strengthen the ideological structure founded on the exceptional nature of America. What could be saved of the national character in a society that was becoming increasingly complex and powerful, and increasingly inegalitarian?

The pioneer industrialists of the nineteenth century, such as Francis Lowell who built his textile mills at the falls on the Merrimack river, attracting a labour force of New England farmers' daughters, dreamed of creating a prosperous and conflict-free industrial society. There was to be no "Manchester of America". By the end of the century, however, large-scale industry was employing an unskilled workforce of immigrants fresh off the ships from Europe.

Was anything left of the Lowell ideals in Carnegie's Pittsburgh or Ford's Detroit? Fear of social corruption governed the ideological reaction of the Protestants to urban proletarianization. The victims of poverty were seen as a threat to society. Cities became missionary territory. Only the idea of an open society, whose most able members could win their place in the sun by overcoming the barriers of language and prejudice, could replace the unattainable dream of a poverty-free society.

A share in the national heritage

The main problem of American social dynamics was still to be resolved: how to form a homogeneous society from its heterogeneous parts. Some historians suggested prosperity, which could be said to have served as a foundation for democracy, as a linking theme. Others saw the many opportunities for individual social advancement as the key to the equilibrium of American society. Yet others laid emphasis on the workers' right to vote. In Europe, demands for the right to vote added a political dimension to the struggle waged by the proletariat, but the granting of that right in America defused the political struggle and buried class consciousness. For some, social equilibrium has never been seriously threatened by the diversity of the American people, since they all enjoy prosperity, whereas for others a

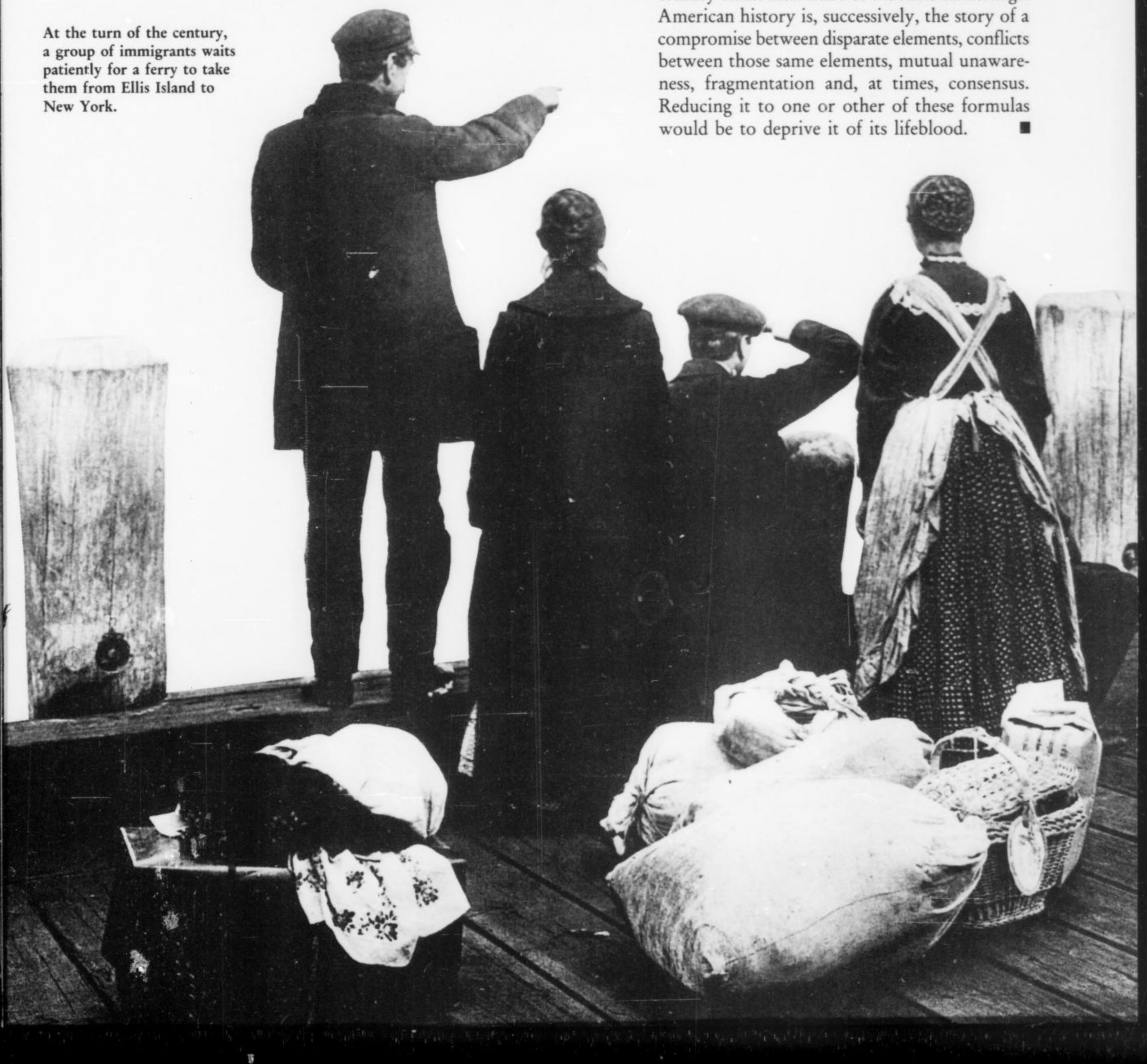
OLIVIER ZUNZ, American historian, teaches at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA. He is the author of *The Changing Face of Inequality: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* and *Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920*, both published by University of Chicago Press, 1982, and *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (forthcoming).

balance has been maintained through the skill displayed by the governing class in warding off conflicts.

In the mid-twentieth century, America rediscovered a strong sense of "togetherness". Immigration controls from the 1920s onwards made for a more homogeneous society in which the "melting pot" seemed to have become a reality. The period of prosperity which followed the Second World War and the decline of the European and Japanese economies left the way clear for the country's expansion. The level of affluence was such that intellectuals could speak with confidence of the end of ideologies. Currents of thought that had hitherto been separate ran together to give the country a new sense of strength and homogeneity. The search for the national character was renewed, prompted by the historians of consensus.

But history is always more complicated than the sometimes deceptive moments of national union might suggest. The intellectual explosion of the 1960s, the country's embroilment in Viet Nam, the Watergate crisis, the battles about the legitimacy of the welfare state and the extension of civil rights, the rediscovery of ethnic heritages, and women's struggle for equality—in short, the realities of the "divided society"—quickly undermined the idea of consensus.

On the other hand, the idea of there being a national character has proved more resistant, for it is over a particular view of America that political and social battles have been—and are still being—fought. Where is legitimate America, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, with its dual significance of republican liberty and national diversity? Who can claim America's history as their own? When these questions are raised, it is all too often forgotten that the very concept of unity, so ardently sought after, implies by definition the concept of diversity. The two are inseparable. All the groups of people which have helped to build the country since the seventeenth century claim their share of the national heritage. American history is, successively, the story of a compromise between disparate elements, conflicts between those same elements, mutual unawareness, fragmentation and, at times, consensus. Reducing it to one or other of these formulas would be to deprive it of its lifeblood. ■



At the turn of the century, a group of immigrants waits patiently for a ferry to take them from Ellis Island to New York.

a universal history— possibility or pipe dream?

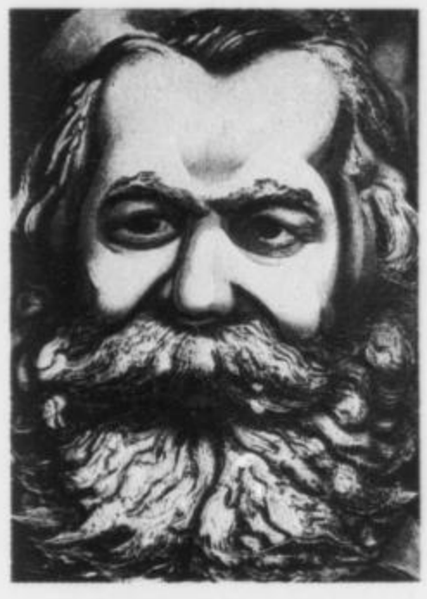
Is there any sense or purpose in the concept of a universal history and a universal identity? The great philosophers of history of the nineteenth century who first propounded this concept succeeded only in arresting its development. Perhaps the time has come to ask what form a truly universal history might take.

FROM HEGEL TO MARX

THE SAGA OF THE DIALECTIC

BY EMMANUEL TERRAY

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831).



Karl Marx (1818-1883) by the Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974).

In the closing years of the eighteenth century, when the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel appeared on the scene, philosophical thought bore the profound imprint of the teachings of Immanuel Kant.

Kant had left philosophy in a state of apparently irreconcilable schism. There was the split between subject and object, the resolution of which was then seen as the central problem facing the philosopher; there was the split within the subject, between the observable individual and the transcendental "I", which alone was capable of constituting knowledge; there was the split within the object, between the phenomenon and the inaccessible "thing-in-itself"; there was the conflict, with regard to human conduct, between the necessity imposed by the world and freedom of the will, and, in the field of ethics, between the concepts of duty and happiness.

At each of these levels, Kant placed in opposition two terms or elements between which no unity or harmony seemed conceivable. Whereupon, all those who came after him set about re-establishing the lost unity and reconciling the adversaries that Kant had drawn up in opposing ranks.

The method adopted by Hegel to achieve this objective was to accept the dichotomy and antagonism as the outward appearance of present reality and to propound reconciliation as a future necessity. He therefore introduced the notion of time into the relationships between subject and object, between the rational and the real. These relationships were no longer to be seen as fixed for all time by "the nature of things"; they had to be seen in the context of an evolutionary process during which two opposing elements would change each other and be transformed into each other.

The process described by Hegel has three main stages. During the first stage, the concept, the original and fundamental entity, is formed within the framework or setting of the ideal, of the abstract. This gives rise to the great categories of philosophical thought—being, nothingness, becoming, number, measure, and so on—the classification and study of which make up the science of Logic.

During the second stage, in a spasm of self-negation, the concept becomes the thing, reality, nature. Nature, in fact, is nothing more than the

"Man Masters the Universe with Technology" (1934), detail from a 56 m² mural by Diego Rivera. Palace of Fine Arts, Mexico City.

concept become reality—which is why it is, by definition, understandable—but as such, nature is "the thing in itself", blind, deaf and dumb.

Then comes the third stage, when the concept re-asserts itself, yet without losing its quality as object. This is the stage of history, and history itself could be described as the process whereby reason gradually gains ascendancy over the real, which it orders in conformity with its own requirements. At the end of the process, reconciliation is achieved, and unity is restored between subject and object, so that, as Hegel wrote in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right,* "All that is real is rational and all that is rational is real".

Absolute knowledge, the driving force of history

Each of the great periods of history is thus seen as one of the stages in this process, one of the phases of the movement by which reason takes control of the world and submits it to its law. Hegel opens our eyes to the unity of each historical period. This unity takes the form of the *Volksgeist,* or national spirit. A manifestation of the *Weltgeist,* or world spirit, at a particular stage of its historical development, the *Volksgeist* in its turn inspires and moulds all the institutions and all the great works of the historical period concerned. Politics, religion, the economy, the arts, all bear its imprint. Each epoch can thus be described as "the expression of a totality" in which each element mirrors the other elements separately and as a whole.

Naturally, the various nations do not make equal progress. For each stage, one nation acts as model and guide, providing us with a criterion by means of which we can judge to what extent the other nations' achievements match up to the demands of historical development.

At the same time, however, each of these distinct totalities is provisional only and doomed to disappear and be replaced. This is because, at the heart of each of them, the *Weltgeist* is working away in subterranean fashion. So long as the reconquest of the real has not been achieved, so long as there remains anywhere within the world an enclave of resistance to the empire of reason—an unexplored realm of nature, a sector of society where disorder and confusion reign—reason remains unsatisfied. It undermines the edifices it has itself constructed, since, having fulfilled their purpose, they would only become obstacles if they claimed the right to exist for ever.

This thrust by which the spirit is continually bringing its own creations into question is driven by the thought and actions of men, who, nevertheless, are unaware of this. This is what Hegel called

"The Coronation of Napoleon I", by the French artist Jacques Louis David (1748-1825).
Right, a deputation from Silesia pays homage to the king of Prussia, Frederick II the Great (1741). Painting by the German historical artist Wilhelm Camphausen (1818-1885).

"reason's trick"—using for its own ends agents who think that they are working for other purposes.

A philosophy of history constructed on these principles displays some remarkable characteristics. It is first of all a philosophy of progress. History has a direction and a purpose and strives towards the triumph of reason and the spirit, which Hegel called "absolute knowledge". It is also a dialectical philosophy. Each period of history is a transitory, passing stage, marked by contradictions which lead inevitably to ruin. Finally, it is a philosophy of necessity. The only objective an actual historical individual—whether an individual hero or a single people—can aspire to is to fulfil the imperatives of the world spirit as they appear to be in the historical period concerned, without attempting to forestall them, to halt them or, least of all, to reverse them. The great men of history—Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon—and the great peoples of history—the Greeks, the Romans and the Prussians—are those who have succeeded in discerning these imperatives and have taken them as the watchword of their actions, thus playing their part in the gradual victory of the spirit.

The major enigma and difficulty of Hegel's philosophy of history lies in the notion of absolute knowledge. The achievement of absolute knowledge marks the end of history. But was this a distant prospect, analagous to the Second Coming of Christian doctrine, or was it closer at hand and thus already liable to influence man's actions? Hegel's stance on this point seems to have varied. He praised the Napoleonic empire and then the Prussian state in terms that might seem to suggest that with them history was coming to an end.

This question was to cause deep divisions among Hegel's successors. Those who held that reason had attained its goal became conservative partisans of the established order. Others had little difficulty in demonstrating the political and social reality that disorder and violence were still disputing power with reason and that, consequently, the march of history could only be continuing. The latter group comprised the "Hegelian Left", among whom one of the most eloquent representatives was the young Karl Marx.

Marx: from Hegelianism to the class war

The Marxist edifice is closely dependent on the Hegelian structure. Marx took from Hegelianism what is undoubtedly its essential element—the dialectical framework. History is seen as a process having a direction, a beginning and an end. This process is powered by a force which seeks to conquer and subjugate reality. This conquest passes through several stages, each stage representing a partial, limited step towards accomplishment of the final goal. Although each such achievement is a sign of progress at the time it occurs, it eventually becomes an obstacle to further development which must be destroyed so that the forward movement can continue until the final goal is reached.

What Marx altered in the Hegelian design was the nature of the motor that powered the process. As we have seen, for Hegel, this motor was a kind of energy inherent in the concept itself, which led it continually to escape from its own limits and to absorb whatever it found outside those limits. This central role accorded to the concept led Marx to accuse Hegel of idealism. For Marx, the motor of history was not the abstract dynamism of the concept, but the needs, the aspirations and desires of the individuals and the specific groups—families, nations and classes—that constitute the human race.

These individuals and groups have material needs. They must feed, clothe and shelter themselves and they can satisfy these needs only by making use of the resources of nature. History, then, is first of all a process whereby people take possession of nature to make use of it for their own ends. This process involves both knowledge, through the advancement of science, and action, through technological progress, and can be seen at work in the development of human productive forces. It is through this process that people become aware of the world around them and of their place in that world. On this basis Marx felt himself justified in declaring, in contradiction to Hegel, that "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness".

Thus Marx put forward his "materialism" in

opposition to Hegelian idealism. In the Marxist philosophy of history, this materialism is expressed in the fundamental role given to labour and the economy. These are described as the "ultimate determinants" and form the matrix around which arise the institutions and the characteristic manifestations of social life in the fields of politics, law, culture and religion.

In their struggle to dominate nature people have to become organized so that they can, through cooperation, obtain the best results through their joint efforts and also so that they can share the fruits of their labours. Initially, their work is not very productive and provides just enough for the community to subsist. There is a state of equality in poverty, which Marx called "primitive communism".

Then comes a stage at which the first increases in productivity give rise to a small surplus, but this is too small for all to benefit from it and a struggle arises as to who shall have it. Thus are sown the seeds of the class war. A fraction of the society gains control over the means of production, whatever form these may take—land, skills, the labour force—and as a result arrogates to itself the monopoly of the surplus. To ensure this privilege, it also takes over political power and intellectual leadership.

For each stage in the development of technology and productive forces there is, of course, a corresponding form of organization of labour and fixed

Soviet May Day poster, 1920. The caption reads: "Through the ruins of capitalism, towards a world brotherhood of workers!"

"production relationships", which in turn support political "superstructures" and specific cultural "forms of consciousness".

As progress is made from stage to stage the class war alters and the protagonists change. Slaves become serfs and then the proletariat of modern times. On the other side of the divide, the master is succeeded by the lord and the lord by the capitalist entrepreneur. Yet, at each stage, the class struggle retains its driving role. This is aptly expressed in the words of the Communist Manifesto: "All history has hitherto been a history of class struggles."

By changing the "motor" Marx also changed the nature of the necessity that governs the course of history. Hegelian necessity was an abstract, ideal necessity and, as such, could not be halted by any obstacle. From the moment that he considered human actions as the dynamic of historical development, Marx had to allow for other contingencies. Collective action implies taking a stand and organizing. This in turn implies the possibility of error and failure. In other words, progress could be slowed down, halted or side-tracked; its future could not be detailed in advance.

The Hegelian heritage and the environment created by the development of evolutionary theory exercised a powerful joint pressure on Marxist thought and led to the reinstatement of necessity to pride of place. Engels, and then the theorists of the Second and Third International, were the prime movers in this change of direction, at the end of which determinism had ousted free will in Marxist thought. History then appeared as an inevitable succession of methods of production leading to communism and the classless society. That certain passages from the writings of Marx can be quoted in support of such an interpretation is undeniable, but this does not make it any the less a betrayal of the more original and innovative aspects of his thinking. ■

EMMANUEL TERRAY, of France, is director of studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. A specialist on the anthropology of tropical Africa, he is the author of *Lettres à la fugitive* (Odile Jacob, Paris, 1988) and *La politique dans la caverne* (Le Seuil, Paris, forthcoming).

A NEW MODEL
FOR A UNIVERSAL HISTORY

WORLD RHYTHMS

BY ROBERT BONNAUD

WHAT are we entitled to ask of a "universal history"? First, that it should maintain a certain balance and not give too large a place to Western history and its antecedents—the triumphal progression from the Egypt of the pyramids to Europe's *belle époque*. To borrow the titles of works published during the eighteenth century, we would expect it to be "the history of all the peoples of the world", or "the history of mankind".

We would also expect it to be more than a series of separate histories juxtaposed, a parade of witnesses that are perfect strangers to one another. It would have to be a comparative history, a confrontation that would reveal differences and similarities, a drama whose plot unfolds, a mosaic pieced together to create a global landscape, a common adventure.

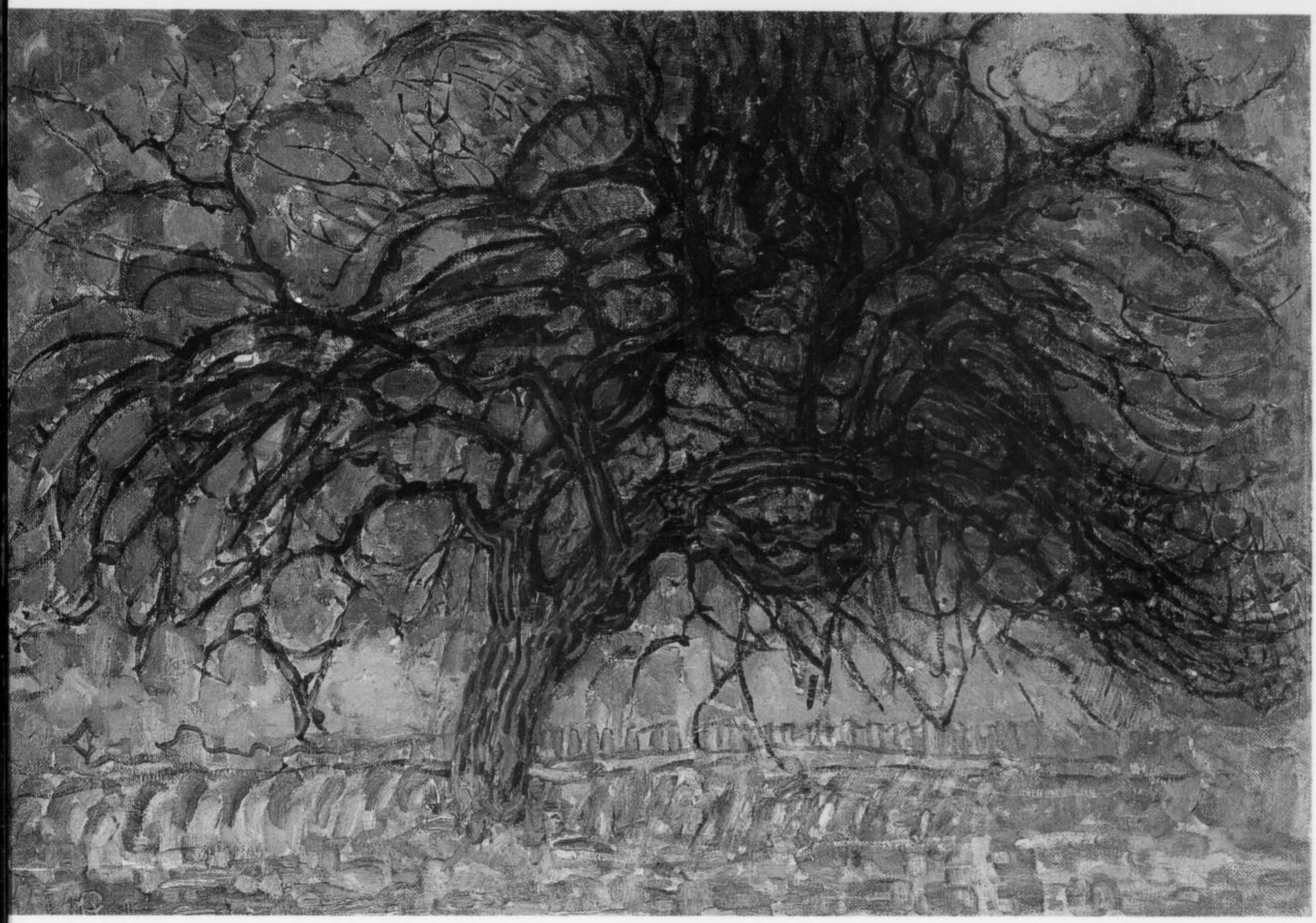
Yet this would still not be enough. There might be one character so central to this drama that, even if all proportions were respected and all the links were made, the work as a whole might take on the aspect of an apologia. This universal history could be a comparative history of all the peoples of the world but yet be a history that always favoured the same group and which, however vast and however meticulously examined the terrain might be, nevertheless aimed to set that group off to advantage. Such was the comparative history written by Max Weber (1864-1920). His was an impressive, all-encompassing inquiry with India, China and Islam called for examination before a painstaking judge, but a judge who thought that Western culture was superior to the others and who felt the need to provide irrefutable proof of this.

Some brave attempts

Like Copernicus putting the Earth back in its place among the planets, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) overturned this vision by "de-Westernizing" history. Western culture was placed among the eight human cultures. Like the others—with the exception of pre-Columbian culture which had disappeared, prematurely assassinated—it was to have its thousand years of history (from the year 1000 to the year 2000), passing through four phases, each of 250 years, with its periods of greatness and of decline. It demonstrated no greater originality than the seven other cultures. Its superiority was an illusion.

Spengler's vision was of cultures of equal worth, with a common destiny and all subject to the same law of development. The cohesiveness of universal history seems, however, to be given the lie by the deep diversity of cultures, compartmentalized and shut in upon themselves like monads [indivisible and impenetrable units]. Could it be that there are eight histories rather than one? Ethnic particularities fragment humanity and the "spirit of peoples" effaces the "spirit of the times", that is to say, the similarities and parallels engendered by an epoch.

For Spengler, contemporaneity did not mean being



"The Red Tree" (1908-1910), by the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944).

of the same chronological time. Around 200 BC, the culture of Antiquity, then in decline (it lasted from 1000 BC to the beginning of the Christian era), experienced a wave of religious enthusiasm, a recurrence of which Spengler detected in Western culture from 1800 AD. Such parallels are valuable, but others, absent from Spengler's "model", contradict them. For example, around 200 BC the ancient Mediterranean world, in harmony with the Indian, Chinese and pre-Columbian worlds, was experiencing a moralistic and religious wave that swept over all humanity. Similarly, around 1800, the Western world was not unique; the religious renewal of that period was not only Catholic and Protestant, but Orthodox, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist as well.

Spengler's model was adapted and improved by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975). He added to it the theory of creative challenge and cultural response, whose possibilities are far from having been fully exploited by social scientists. He rid it of much of the emphasis on decadence and cultural polycentrism which Spengler had taken to absurd lengths in his *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1922; *The Decline of the West,* 1926-1928).

In his major work, the twelve-volume *Study of History* (1934-1961), as well as in some of his other books, Toynbee propounded a kind of progressionism that was heedful of convergences of human thought, even at times of its worldwide synchronism at the universal turning-points of history. After the Second World War, however, Toynbee the philosopher of history became more and more Toynbee the historian and his interest in historical universals declined. It is thus difficult to speak in the full sense of a "Toynbee model" of universal history.

Guiseppe Ferrari, universalist

If we are looking for a model of universal history that attempts to portray the usually barely visible, commonly unsuspected "identity of mankind", that brings out the unity of the "noösphere" (the wholly human area of conscious thought) in its structures and rhythms, that aspires to give a picture of the "human norm" across the ages, with all its qualitative and quantitative fluctuations, then it is to Guiseppe Ferrari (1811-1876) that we should turn. Considered in Italy to be an important social thinker but unknown in France despite the fact that he lived there for twenty years, Ferrari published two books that are now virtually completely forgotten: "The History of State Politics" (1860), in which he expressed his intuitive belief in the convergence and temporal coincidence of world events, and "China and Europe" (1867), in which he developed this theme.

Similar ideas are to be found in the writings of other authors of the period: in Antoine-Augustin Cournot's *Traité de l'enchainement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire* (1861; "The Links between Fundamental Concepts in the Sciences and in History"), in which he urged the need for a comparative history describing the "strange analogies and temporal coincidences" to be found in Chinese and European history; in Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863; *Life of Jesus,* 1869), in which he affirms that "history is full of strange temporal coincidences as a result of which, with no communication between them, widely separated groups of human beings come simultaneously to share almost identical ideas and perceptions"; in the works of Sir Edward Tylor, anthropologist, Quaker and apostle of brotherly love, who set out in 1855 in

ROBERT BONNAUD, French historian, teaches the history and theory of history at the University of Paris VII. His publications include *Le système de l'histoire* (Fayard, Paris, 1989) and contributions to the Hachette *Atlas historique* (1986).

search of the "correspondences" that exist between the peoples of the world.

Did not the prophet-historian Michelet himself, from 1825 to 1826, put forward the idea that, since the history of the world was a "system", we should study what had happened throughout the world at given moments in the past—the idea, in other words, of basing a "truly universal history" on worldwide, time-based cross-sections of history? Did he not also write in *La Bible de l'humanité* (1864; "The Bible of Humanity") that a universal history should give men "the sense of a common, fraternal past", the feeling that "men have always thought, felt and loved in the same way"?

Though Ferrari died before the turn of the century, his ideas are present in the work of certain twentieth-century writers. In *Die Neuentstehende Welt* (1927; "The Burgeoning World"), by the German philosopher Hermann von Keyserling, contemporaries are seen as "partial and complementary expressions of a higher unity"; in one of his biographies, *Vie de Vivekananda,* Romain Rolland views separate histories as "branches of a single tree, which together share the changes of the seasons". These ideas are also present in the works of certain authors of universal histories, such as H.G. Wells' *The Outline of History* (1920), and Pierre de Coubertin's *Histoire universelle* (1926-1927; "Universal History"). In *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949; *The Origin and Goal of History,* 1953), Karl Jaspers added the notion of the "axial period" (roughly 600 to 200 BC) during which time, throughout Eurasia, thanks to an exceptional surge of invention and innovation, the cultural future of the greater part of humanity was determined.

Ferrari's ideas are also to be seen in attempts to produce comparative histories of art (Elie Faure), world philosophies (Paul Masson-Oursel), world literatures (René Etiemble), and in the thinking of many important historians, both general historians and orientalists, such as Karl Polanyi, Marshall Hodgson, Lewis Mumford, Jan Romein, Gaston Roupnel, Fernand Braudel, René Grousset, Joseph Needham, Jean Filliozat and Jacques Berque.

Similar concepts are evoked by those observers who note with surprise that different or even opposed cultural and geopolitical areas appear to move in the same direction, experiencing upsurges and stagnation at identical periods and that, despite disparities in the form and degree of change, taken together they provide a mean of planetary significance, curves on the graph of progress that are applicable to all humanity, turning-points that affect the entire noösphere.

Obstacles to be overcome

Nevertheless, the "Ferrari model"—the systematic search for universal rhythms and world turning-points—has yet to be applied and there are many obstacles to its application. The backward state of Western historical studies on non-Western peoples is one. "Common sense", of the kind that observes that the Sun goes round the Earth and that plant life has no connection with animal life, is another and more serious obstacle. This kind of "common sense" admits, the moment that there is some form of contact or influence transmitted between the histories unfolding at the four corners of the Earth, that there may be resemblances between them. Thanks to the "global village" effect and television screens, history becomes universal.

It must, however, be acknowledged that long before the modern media, before the geographical discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the beginnings of the world market, quantitative and qualitative planetary rhythms existed in the wholly human world of thought. To my mind, these planetary rhythms are evidenced in the three areas that make up this world: that of high level creativity, invention and thought in the strictest sense of the term; that of structural change (political, technical, economic and cultural), of innovation and pioneering activities; and, finally, that of consolidation, standardization, expansion and action.

From 1300 to 200 BC, inventive, innovative power was manifest in the Mediterranean countries (the Greeks, from Mycene to the Roman conquest), in the kingdoms of China (from the Yin and the Zhou to the extinction of the latter and the triumph of the Qin) and in India. It has recently been discovered, however, that this power, which has given rise to such expressions as "the Greek miracle", the "axial period" of history and the "lighthouse" of the future, was also an attribute of the Olmecs of pre-Columbian America. Today, specialists also date to the same period the emergence in the Pacific of the Polynesian civilization. For this period, then, we have two additional, contemporary "miracles". This gives us a better grasp of the overall explanatory value of examination and cross-comparison of epochs, of successive human mean achievement levels.

Another obstacle lies in the fact that whereas history is more or less universal, development is more or less uneven, according to the moment selected. The world spread of positive innovation varies as does the range of time-based coincidental convergence. Prehistory (up to about 3000 BC) was more universal than historical times—progress was more evenly spread (the strength of the evidence now forces us to accept that the neolithic age originated from multiple points of departure).

Historical times can be divided into three major periods: ancient-medieval (from 3000 BC to the fifteenth century), modern (from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century), and contemporary (which began at about the time of the First World War). The least universal of these was the second period (the one, oddly enough, in which the world market was created), during which almost all important, positive developments occurred in Western Europe, North America and Japan.

For all that, worldwide parallels and synchronic, coincident developments continued; they were merely less obvious. From about 1630 to 1800, China, like the West, experienced a phase that was more rationalist than the one that preceded it. The English revolution of the seventeenth century and the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century were not the only events of this nature to occur in the world, but they were exceptional in character. This modern period was very "Western". For four and a half centuries, great achievements in thought and action were concentrated in one corner of the globe—and for this reason seemed all the more brilliant and dazzling. But this remains a unique stage in world history.

The last obstacle to the application of the "Ferrari model" of history is by no means the least. To be able to describe the universal turning-points of history, for them to be revealed and accepted as such, historians need a theory which is able to determine the unvarying common elements associated with such turning-points and which jostle for dominance. Inspired but premature, the "Ferrari model" lacks such a theory. Without an understanding of these few dozen elements and the countless combinations to which they can give rise, it is impossible to pin-point the novel quality of an epoch and to recognize its relative homogeneity throughout the world in terms of simultaneous changes of direction in human progress.

Despite the many approaches that have been tried, it would appear that twentieth-century historians are still struggling to define the prerequisites of an authentic universal history. The most important of these preconditions is full recognition of the existence of world rhythms. To achieve this goal we shall have to stop concentrating on the study of a limited section of humanity, renounce specificity and open history up to its universal reality. ■

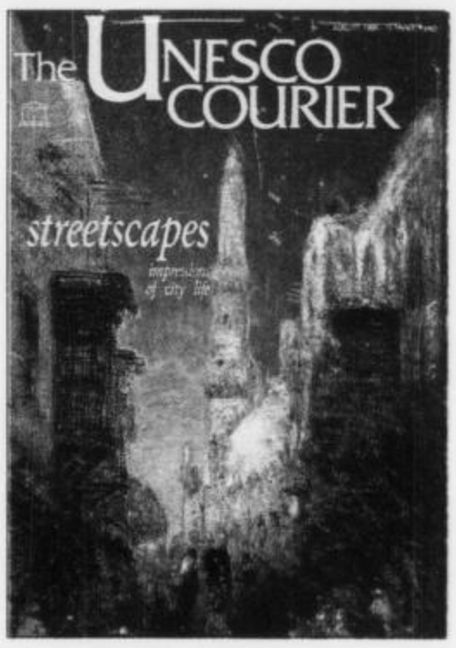
From top to bottom:

Baule mask, Côte d'Ivoire. Black polished wood.

Ceremonial mask, pre-Columbian Chancay culture, central Peru. Baked clay painted in three colours, c. 1100 AD.

Beaten iron mask from Gaul. 1st century AD.

Bronze Buddha. Thailand, 15th-16th century.



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Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the noted Burkinabe historian and author of many articles and books including *Histoire de l'Afrique noire* (1978; "The History of Black Africa"), here reflects on the importance of oral tradition as a source for the writing of African history. This key text is an extract from his introduction to Volume I of the *General History of Africa*, published in 1981 under the auspices of Unesco (see page 50), of which he was the general editor.

Oral tradition as a historical source

BY JOSEPH KI-ZERBO

BESIDES the two major sources of African history (written documents and archaeology), oral tradition takes its place as a real living museum, conserver and transmitter of the social and cultural creations of peoples purported to have no written records. This spoken history is a very frail thread by which to trace our way back through the dark corridors of the labyrinth of time. Its custodians are hoary-headed old men with cracked voices, whose memories are often dim, who have the stickler's insistence on etiquette *(vieillesse oblige!)*, as behoves potential ancestors. They are like the last remaining islets in a landscape that was once imposing and coherent but which is now eroded, flattened and thrown into disorder by the sharp waves of modernism. Latter-day fossils!

Whenever one of them dies, a fibre of Ariadne's thread is broken, a fragment of the

Above, a Senegalese *griot*.

landscape literally disappears underground. Yet oral tradition is by far the most intimate and the richest of historical sources, the one which is most filled with the sap of authenticity. As an African proverb puts it, "The mouth of an old man smells bad, but it says good and salutary things". However useful the written record may be, it is bound to stiffen and dry up its subject. It decants, dissects, schematizes, petrifies: the letter killeth. Tradition clothes things in flesh and blood and colour, it gives blood to the skeleton of the past. It presents in three dimensions what is often crowded onto the two-dimensional surface of a piece of paper. The joy of Sundiata's mother,* overwhelmed by the sudden recovery of her son, still bursts forth in the warm and epic tones of the *griots* of Mali. Of course, we have to skirt many pitfalls in order to winnow the material offered by oral tradition—to separate the wheat of fact from the chaff of words that are only there for the sake of symmetry or polish, and of set phrases that are only the formal wrapping of a message from the distant past.

Speech is a weighty matter

It has been said that oral tradition does not inspire confidence because it is functional—as if every human message were not by definition functional, including archives, which by their very passiveness, and beneath an appearance of neutrality and objectivity, conceal so many lies by omission and clothe error in respectability. It is true that the epic tradition in particular is a para-mythical recreation of the past, a sort of psycho-drama revealing to a community its roots and the corpus of values which nourish its personality; a magic passport enabling it to travel back up the river of time to the realm of its ancestors. That is why epic and historical utterance are not exactly the same. The first overlaps the second, with anachronistic projections forward and backward in real time, and with concertina effects like those found in the earth in archaeology. But do not written records suffer from these enigmatic intrusions too? Here as elsewhere we must seek the nugget of sense, try to find a detector which identifies pure metal and rejects slag and dross.

Of course, the Achilles' heel of epic is the weakness of the chronological sequence. Mixed-up temporal sequences cause the image of the past to reach us, not clear and stable as in a mirror, but like a fleeting, broken reflection on the surface of a ruffled stream. For example, the use of the average length of reigns or generations for measuring distances back into the past by extrapolation from recent periods has been vigorously disputed, and has to be accepted with great reserve, since demographic and other changes may have taken place. Sometimes an exceptional and magnetic monarch polarizes the exploits of his predecessors and successors around his own person, and the others are literally eclipsed. This applies to certain dynasts in Rwanda, and to Da Monzon, King of Segou in the early nineteenth century, to whom the *griots* attribute all that kingdom's major conquests.

Furthermore, an oral account taken out of its context is like a fish out of water: it dies. Taken in isolation, oral tradition resembles African masks wrested from the communion of the faithful and exhibited to the curiosity of the uninitiated. It loses its significance and life. Yet it is through that life, because it is always being taken over by fresh witnesses charged with transmitting it, that oral tradition adapts itself to the expectations of new audiences, an adaptation that relates mainly to the presentation of the message, although this does not always leave the content intact. Moreover, some modern sharks and mercenaries of oral tradition even serve up rehashes of written texts which they reinject into the oral one!

Even the content of the message is often hermetic or esoteric. For the African, speech is a weighty matter—an ambiguous force which can

* Sundiata, founder of the Mali empire in the 13th century, is one of the most popular heroes of African history. *Editor*

make and unmake, which can be the bearer of evil. That is why the message is not articulated openly and directly, but wrapped up in fable, allusion, hints and proverbs that are hard to understand for the common run of people but clear for those who possess the antennae of wisdom. In Africa, speech is too weighty to be wasted, and the more authoritative one's position the less one speaks in public. But if someone says to another, "You have eaten the toad and spat out its head", he understands at once that he is being accused of avoiding part of his responsibilities. The hermeticism of this "half-speech" shows at once the inestimable value of oral tradition, and its limits. It is almost impossible to transfer all its richness from one language to another, especially when that other is structurally and sociologically very remote. Tradition does not stand up well to translation. When uprooted it loses its vigour and authenticity, for language is "the home of being". Many errors ascribed to tradition itself are due to incompetent or unscrupulous interpreters.

The solid substance of historical reality

Be that as it may, the validity of oral tradition has today been amply proved, and confirmed by crosschecking with written and archaeological sources, as in the case of the Koumbi Saleh site, the Lake Kisale remains and the events of the sixteenth century as transmitted by the Shona, which D.P. Abraham has observed to be in agreement with the writings of Portuguese travellers of the period.

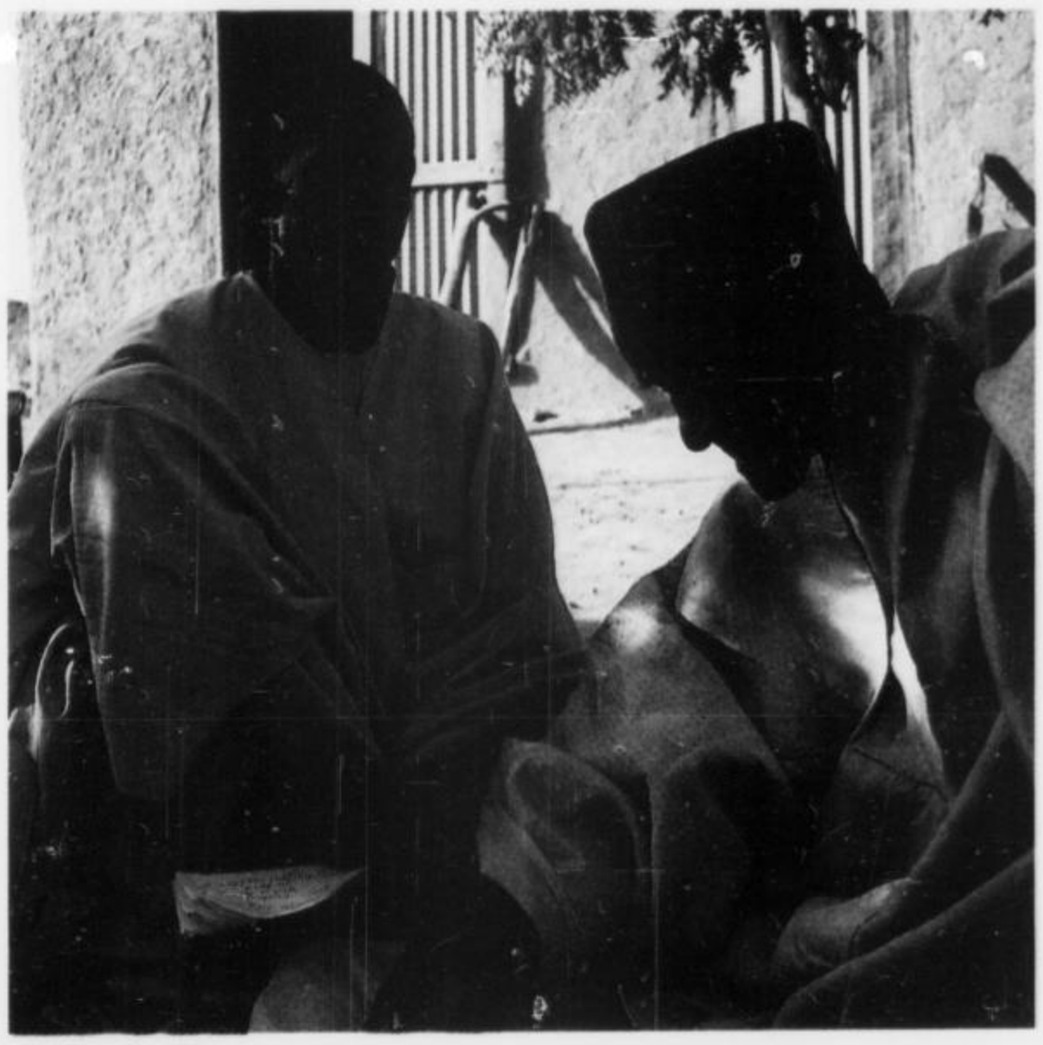
To sum up, the mode of discourse of oral tradition, whether in epic or prose, whether didactic or ethical, may be of historical value from three standpoints. First, it reveals the values and usages which motivate a people and condition their future acts through representation of archetypes from the past. In doing this, it not only reflects but also creates history. When Da Monzon is addressed as "master of waters and master of men", this signifies the absoluteness of his power. But the same stories also show him constantly consulting his warriors, his *griots* and his wives. From the famous line in the *Song of the Bow* in honour of Sundiata *(Sundiata Fasa), "Saya Kaoussa malo yé"* ("Death is preferable to dishonour"), we can appreciate that a sense of honour was one of the values of Malinke society in the thirteenth century.

The same idea is also beautifully expressed in the story of Bakary Dian's struggle against the Fulani of Kournari. The valiant Bakary Dian has retired in anger to his village, Dongorongo, and the people come to beg him to return to the head of the Segou army. He gives way finally when they touch the sensitive chord of pride and glory: "Forget old words exchanged. It is your present name you must think of. For one comes into the world to make a name. If you are born, grow up and die without a name, you have come into the world for nothing, and you have left it for nothing." Then he cries: "*Griots* of Segou, since you have come it is not impossible. I will do what you ask, for the sake of my fame. I will not do it for Da Monzon. I will do it for no one in Segou. I will do it just for my reputation. Even after my death, it will be added to my name." Similarly, the workings of both civilization and law can be seen when Silamaka says, "You are fortunate that I am forbidden to kill messengers".

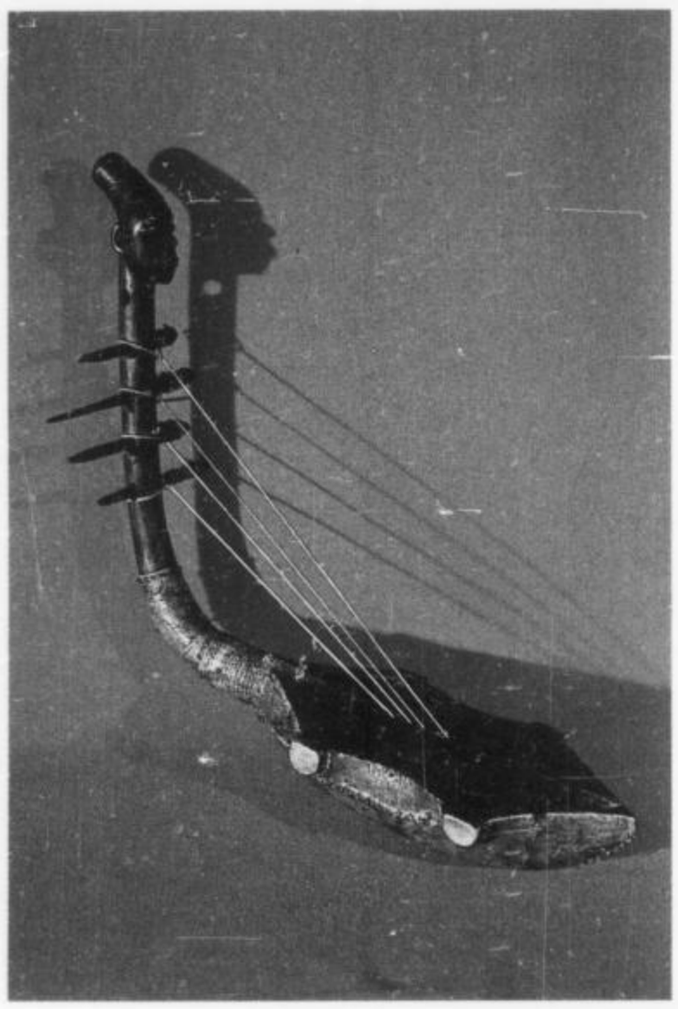
Second, oral tradition offers incidental descriptions of facts and objects. The reconstruction of the past is by no means wholly fictional. There are passages of recollection, veins of history which are often more prosaic than the vivid decorations of the epic imagination: "Thus began this institution of collective herding in Bambara towns. If you were chosen and made a herdsman, you became a public Fula. The public Fulani kept the flocks of the King. They were men of different races, and their chief shepherd was called Bonke." Again: "At that time people did not wear slippers, but leather samaras of tanned ox-hide, with a strap round the nose [the big toe] and a strap round the heel."

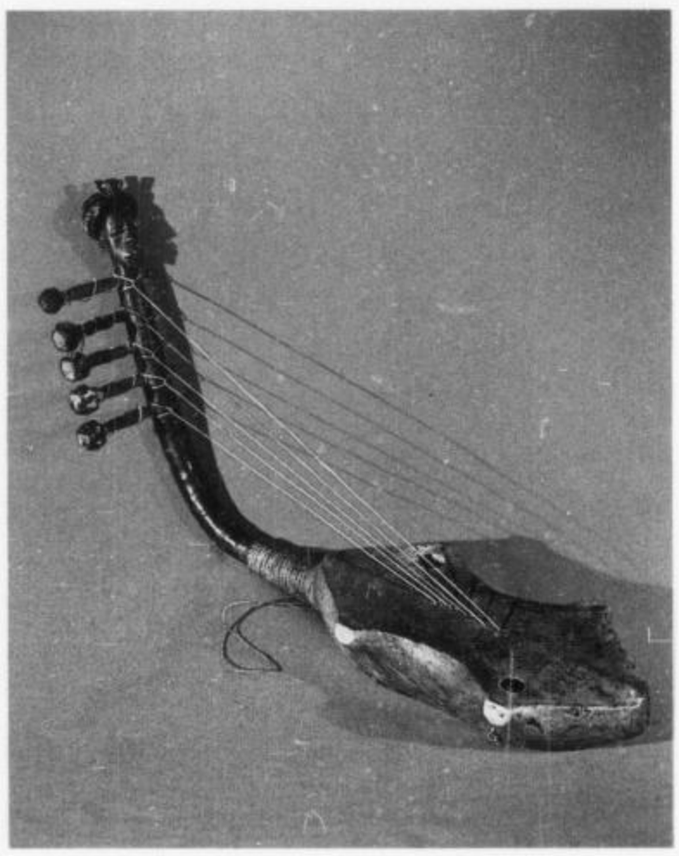
The epic is strewn with allusions to techniques and to objects which are not essential to the action but suggest the setting. "Da Monzon sent for his sixty Somono paddlers, thirty men at the prow and thirty at the stern. The canoe was richly decorated." "Ladders were got ready and set against the wall. The Segou infantry attacked and infiltrated the town... The Segou horsemen launched flaming arrows. The houses of the village caught alight." Saran, the woman in love with Da Monzon, goes and wets the Kore warriors' gunpowder... It is only through a careful analysis, sometimes even psychoanalysis, of the very psychoses of the transmitters of the tradition, and of their audience, that the historian can get to the solid substance of historical reality.

The number of different versions transmitted by rival groups—for example, by the various *griot* clients of each noble protector *(horon, dyatigui)*, far from being a handicap, is on the



Right, a historian consults an elderly chief in Mali. Above, musicians in a Côte d'Ivoire village. Three of them are playing the *balafon*, a West African xylophone with gourd resonators.





African harps, zither (top centre), and drums.

contrary only a further guarantee for critical history. When accounts agree, as in the case of the Bambara and Fula *griots*, who belonged to opposing camps, the authenticity of the evidence is reinforced. And as is shown in the case of the Gouro, with whom a liberal and integrationist exoteric tradition, transmitted by the lineage, coexists with the oligarchical and hairsplitting esoteric tradition of the secret society, spoken history contains self-censoring elements because of its very different origins. In fact, it is not private property, but a common fund which derives from and provides for various groups in the community.

The important thing is that internal criticism of these records should be supported by a thorough knowledge of the genre in question, its themes and techniques, its codes and stereotypes, its set phrases of padding, the conventional digression, the evolution of the language, the audience and its expectations of the storytellers. Above all, the historian must know about the caste to which the latter belonged—their rules of life, how they were brought up, their ideals, their schools. We know that in Mali and Guinea, for example, there have for centuries been actual schools of initiation at Keyla, Kita, Niagassola, Niani, and so on.

The language of music

This rigid, formal and institutional oral tradition to which structure has been imparted in training schools is a third aspect of its historical value. The structure is usually reinforced and supported by court music, which is integral to it and underlines its didactic and artistic elements. Some of the instruments used, such as the *sosso balla* (the *balafon* of Sumarro Kante), are so old that they would repay an archaeological investigation in themselves. But the correspondences between types of instrument and music, types of song and dance, make up a minutely ordered world, in which anomalies and later additions are easily detected.

Every genre has its own special instrument in each cultural region: the *balla* (xylophone) or the *bolon* (harp-lute) for epic in Mali; the *bendre* (a big round one-sided drum made out of a gourd and beaten with the bare hands) of the Mossi for the exaltation (often silent) of the *zabyouya (noms de guerre)* of the kings; the *mvet* (harp-zither) for the tropical *Niebelungen* of the Fang poet-musicians. These instruments, the vehicles of spoken history, are sacred, the object of veneration. In effect they are part of the artist, and their importance in communicating the message is all the greater since, because language is tonal, music has direct meaning; the instrument becomes the artist's voice and he does not need to utter a word. The triple rhythm of tone, intensity and duration becomes music with meaning, the kind of "semantic melodism" Marcel Jousse spoke of. As a matter of fact, music is so much a part of oral tradition that some stories can only be told in song. Popular song, which epitomizes the will of the people in a satirical form, sometimes spiced with black humour, which still retains its vitality even in the present age with its election campaigns, is a valuable genre, complementing and counterbalancing the evidence of official records.

What has been said here of music applies equally to the other modes of expression, such as the visual arts. As in the bas-reliefs of the kingdoms of Abomey and Benin, or in Kuba sculpture, we sometimes find a direct expression of historical characters, cultures and events.

Thus oral tradition is not just a second-best source to be resorted to only when there is nothing else. It is a distinct source in itself, with a now well-established methodology, and it lends the history of the African continent a marked originality. ■

●●●

Odorous opera

Audiences at a recent London production of Prokofiev's opera *The Love of Three Oranges* had an opportunity to smell key scenes as well as see and hear them. The opera tells the story of a prince who's love for an orange, which turns into a princess, triumphs over evil plots. By scraping cards incorporating "fragrance panels" at appropriate moments, the audience could smell orange blossom, bad eggs (demon scene), rotten meat (kitchen scene) and an exotic perfume (finale).

●●●

Gene that makes brain protein discovered

Researchers have located for the first time a gene crucial for brain function, reports the British scientific journal *Nature*. The gene is one of several that tells brain cells how to make a protein called a glutamate receptor which plays an important role in the process of brain cell communication. Scientists hope that studies on glutamate receptors may lead to the development of drugs that limit brain damage in stroke, seizure or head injury victims, and to improved treatment for learning and memory disorders.

●●●

Dental health and wealth

Increasing consumption of junk food and refined sugar in developing countries has led to a marked rise in tooth decay since the 1960s, says the World Health Organization (WHO). A notable exception is China, whose children have the healthiest teeth on the WHO scale based on the number of decayed, missing and filled teeth in 12-year-olds. In the industrialized world, according to the WHO report on "Trends in Oral Health and Care", hygiene and fluoridation programmes have caused an improvement in dental health, with Finland and Australia highest on the scale, closely followed by the USA and Sweden.

●●●

Great epics from a single source?

A single lost oral source may lie at the origin of Homer's *Odyssey*, the *Arabian Nights* and the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In a recent book,* Dr. Stephanie Dalley has pointed out major points of similarity between the works which suggest that Odysseus, Gilgamesh and Sindbad may originate from the same character. Cross-fertilization between the epics may have occurred as traditional tales were adapted by storytellers for different ethnic audiences.

* ***Myths from Mesopotamia,*** **Oxford University Press, 1989**

●●●

Leaning Tower at full tilt

The Leaning Tower of Pisa has been closed to the public so that work can be carried out to make it permanently safe without losing its tilt. Begun in 1174, the 14,000-tonne white marble Tower is 8 stories high to its belfry, which was added in 1350. It is currently leaning over 5 metres from the perpendicular and is sinking about 1 mm a year.

●●●

Against "lifestyle" diseases

The World Health Organization has launched a programme called "Interhealth" to promote healthy living and action against noncommunicable diseases caused by choice of lifestyles—notably by too much fatty food, salt and alcohol, by tobacco, lack of exercise and polluted air. Noncommunicable diseases cause 70 to 80 per cent of deaths in industrialized countries and 40 to 50 per cent in the developing world, WHO says.

●●●

Prehistoric monster

Palaeontologists in Colorado, USA, have unearthed the fossilized remains of a dinosaur which rivalled the size of the gigantic carnivore Tyrannosaurus Rex but lived 30 million years earlier. Known as Epanterias, the beast was about 15 metres long, weighed about 4 tonnes and could have eaten up to 40 tonnes of meat a year. "It could even have swallowed a whole cow," said Mr. Robert T. Bakker of the University of Colorado, leader of the expedition which discovered the remains.

●●●

Museums and literacy

Unesco's quarterly review *Museum* marks the start of International Literacy Year with its first issue for 1990 (No. 165). Articles focus on museums which celebrate the history of the written word, such as the Sungam Archives (Rep. of Korea) and the Gutenberg Museum, Mainz (Fed. Rep. of Germany) and on museums in France, Kazakhstan (USSR), Cuba and Nicaragua which record the spread of mass literacy. The issue also contains a section on museums in the Pacific and regular features including "A city and its museums" (Beijing). The theme of *Museum*'s next issue will be "Port museums around the world".

●●●

Preparing for catastrophe

As part of its contribution to the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999), the World Health Organization has opened a Panafrican Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). The Centre has been set up to help cope with catastrophes such as drought, famine, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, wars, and outbreaks of communicable disease, all of which have afflicted Africa in recent years.

ANNA AKHMATOVA
'MOTHER COURAGE' OF POETRY

BY YELENA BYELYAKOVA

Portrait of Anna Akhmatova (1914), by Nathan Altman (1889-1970).

THE life of Anna Akhmatova was a tragic one. Although she had her moments of glory she also experienced terrible humiliations.

She was born in 1889, and her youth coincided with an extraordinary literary flowering, the silver age of Russian poetry. Her first volume of verses, *Vecher* (''Evening'') was published in 1912. It was followed two years later by *Chyotki* (''Rosary'') which was reprinted eight times and made her name. The themes of most of her early poems are meetings and separations, love and solitude. Their style is rigorous, lucid, laconic.

Her poetry was read throughout Russia, and the critics predicted a brilliant future for this ''Russian Sappho''. She published regularly—*Belaya staya* (1917; ''The White Flock''), *Podorozhnik* (1921; ''Plantain''), and *Anno Domini MCMXXI* (1922).

Unlike many intellectuals in her circle, Akhmatova did not emigrate after the Revolution of October 1917. Yet in 1923 her work ceased to be published. The official view was that her lyrics were alien to the new generation of readers produced by the Revolution. Fame was followed by oblivion: for seventeen years her name vanished from literature.

Life had other trials in store for her. In 1921 her first husband, the poet Nikolay Gumilyov, was executed after being accused of taking part in a counter-revolutionary conspiracy. Her son, the orientalist Lev Gumilyov, was arrested in 1935 and eventually spent fourteen years in prison and exile in Siberia. Her third husband, the art historian Nikolay Punin, died in prison.

Yet Anna Akhmatova continued to write. The anguish she shared with thousands of other women who queued outside the prisons of Leningrad inspired the cycle *Rekviem* (1935-1940; ''Requiem''), which tells the tragic story of a mother separated from her only son. She visited her friend the poet Osip Mandelstam, exiled in Voronezh, and wrote poems filled with foreboding about his imminent death. She denounced the illegal and arbitrary acts which were being committed in her country, and exposed the cruelty of Stalin and his entourage. Fearing arrest, she memorized her verses rather than write them down.

In 1940 several poems she had written before the Revolution were published. Later, patriotic lyrics she wrote during the war were published in several newspapers and magazines.

But in 1946 she became the main target of an ideological campaign launched against the artistic and literary intelligentsia by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which passed a resolution condemning the literary reviews *Zvezda* (''The Star'') and *Leningrad* for publishing her poetry, which was branded as ''bourgeois and decadent'', ''devoid of an ideological message'' and ''alien to the Soviet people''.

The entire printrun of her most recent collection of poems was destroyed and she was expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers. For ten years she was again ostracized. Not until the thaw which followed the death of Stalin was she reinstated in the Writers' Union and allowed to publish again. By now the interest in her poetry was immense.

In the 1960s Akhmatova became world famous. Her work was translated into English, French, German, Italian, Czech, Bulgarian and many other languages. Many articles, books and studies were published about her poetry. In 1964 she travelled to Italy where she was awarded the Etna-Taormina international poetry prize, and in the following year she received an honorary doctorate from Oxford University.

Anna Akhmatova died on 5 March 1966. As the years go by the interest in her work continues to grow. Her collections of poems are often reprinted, and unpublished works are coming to light, including some fine patriotic poems which were virtually unknown in the Soviet Union until recently. *Rekviem*, which had appeared in the West in the 1960s, was not published in the Soviet Union until 1987. In 1988, the Communist Party resolution against the reviews *Leningrad* and *Zvezda* was officially rescinded and in 1989 *Zvezda* devoted an entire issue to the centenary of Anna Akhmatova's birth.

The city of Leningrad, which played a major part in her life, was the centre of the centenary celebrations in June 1989. A memorial museum was opened on the Fontanka Embankment, where for over thirty years she had lived and composed some of her most tragic poems. Conferences were organized by the Russian Literature Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Leningrad Writers' Organization. At literary and musical evenings leading poets read her works and poems dedicated to her by contemporaries including Aleksandr Blok, Marina Tsvetayeva, Osip Mandelstam, and Boris Pasternak. Song cycles of her lyrics set to music by Prokofiev and Slonimsky were also performed.

The anniversary provided the opportunity to pay a fitting tribute to one of the greatest poets of the century. ■

YELENA BYELYAKOVA, of the USSR, is a correspondent of the Novosti Press Agency in Leningrad.

Letters to the Editor

High days and holidays

I was very surprised by the conclusion of Abdol-Hosseyn Zarrinkoub's article on *Now Rouz*, the Iranian New Year festival, which appeared in the "Reflections" feature of your January 1990 issue under the title "The struggle of day and night". The author, an eminent Iranian historian, wrote that "if Islam has kept up this Zoroastrian feast, it is because of the role it plays in the stabilization of the fiscal year and also because of its "jovial and lively ceremonies..."

It is well known that Islam has usually respected all earlier practices whenever these were not socially harmful. Consequently, there has never been any attempt to put an end to the pre-Islamic *Now Rouz* festival in Iran. It has not survived for "fiscal" reasons, nor because of its "jovial" character but because it was tolerated as an established tradition.

Islam has even taken part in some aspects of this festival. Mr. Zarrinkoub must know that on 21 March, the Iranian New Year's Day, at the precise moment of the spring equinox, Iranian Muslims recite a prayer asking "God who transforms night and day" to change the state of their soul and direct it towards goodness.

I am also astonished that Mr. Zarrinkoub should write that the sufis are interested in this festival because of the singing and dancing which accompany it, as if the great sufi thinkers had been engaged in a search for such transient enjoyments...

Reza Feiz
Former Permanent Delegate to Unesco of the Islamic Republic of Iran

A window on the world

I have been reading your magazine for twenty years. For me its excellent illustrations really have been "a window open on the world".

Starting with your June 1989 issue, the magazine's presentation has been modernized and above all its contents have become less abstract. One of the golden rules of modern journalism, which you are now observing more closely, is to present a wide variety of subjects by showing individual people in specific situations. Abstract reasoning automatically requires the kind of language which is found in official documents and which gave your articles a cold and arid flavour. It is the emotional appeal of an article that makes a lasting impact on readers. Ideas only make a mark when they evoke an emotional response.

The interview with Mr. François Mitterrand was, to my mind, a decisive step for your magazine and its new image. I think you should continue to publish regular interviews with and articles by leading politicians as well as outstanding figures in science and culture.

Finally, why not encourage exchanges between peoples in the fields of science and culture by publishing in your letters column the addresses of persons seeking contact with colleagues elsewhere in the world?

Vladimir Ovchinnikov
(Journalist)
Novosibirsk, USSR

Arab mathematics

I am very glad that you devoted an article in your issue "A Mathematical Mystery Tour" (November 1989) to the history of Arab mathematics, a subject which is still not widely known. However, the article calls for some comment.

While I fully agree with what Mr. Rashed s[illegible]s at the end of his interview about the continuity of mathematical thought in the Mediterranean basin from the time of the Greeks until the eighteenth century—I should be inclined to say even until today—I find it hard to subscribe to his other statements. I shall comment here on three questions raised by Mr. Rashed.

1. The originality of al-Khwarizmi's *Kitab al-jabr wa'l muqabalah* ("The Book of Integration and Equation"), which Mr. Rashed seems to take for granted, is far from proven. In the introduction to his book, al-Khwarizmi informs us that it is a "summary *(mulakhkhas)* of the calculation of integration and equation" written at the request of Caliph al-Ma'mun to explain "the subtleties and the difficulties of this form of calculation" and to make it accessible to the public. Before an explanatory summary of a science can be written, that science must already exist.

The originality of the work is particularly difficult to establish since the only surviving earlier text in which algebraic techniques are used is the *Arithmetica,* a treatise by the Greek mathematician Diophantus of Alexandria which dates from the third century AD and thus preceded al-Khwarizmi's work by six centuries. It is true that al-Khwarizmi uses an algebraic vocabulary which does not exist in Diophantus' work. But since no text written later than this and before the time of al-Khwarizmi has survived, it is impossible to be certain about the origin of this vocabulary.

Finally, the problem of the originality of al-Khwarizmi's work is complicated by the fact that the formula used to solve equations of the second degree, which is today taught in secondary school, goes back to Babylonian times.

To say that the style of al-Khwarizmi's work is both "algorithmic and demonstrative" is to obscure the nature of its content. It is not a "style" that is in question. Al-Khwarizmi demonstrates—and this is vitally important—the validity of algebraic formulas for solving equations of the second degree by geometrical demonstrations accompanied by figures. These figures are not taken from Euclid's *Elements,* which was translated into Arabic around the same time as al-Khwarizmi was writing (the third decade of the ninth century). The figures thus do not come from the Greek mathematical tradition. They too pose the question of the work's originality.

2. As for the relationship between algebra and geometry, on the one hand, and the "arithmeticization" of algebra on the other, I cannot see to what texts or procedures of Arab algebra the expressions used by Mr. Rashed refer. If we refer to the texts, the development of algebra and its relationship with geometry and arithmetic can be more precisely and more simply evoked in the following way.

Arab algebra basically comprises

Letters to the Editor

two parts: the solution of equations of the first, second and third degree, and the calculation of polynomials (addition, multiplication, division, the extraction of the roots of polynomials).

a) Al-Khwarizmi says of the relations between these two parts, algebra and arithmetic, that the fundamental objects of algebra—the unknown and the second power of the unknown—are kinds of number. Algebra is thus a form of arithmetic. It cannot have been "arithmeticized" by the successors of al-Khwarizmi. What Mr. Rashed means by this is thus simply a normal—but important—development of the calculation of polynomials.

b) The relations between algebra and geometry are a little more complex. They particularly concern the theory of equations of the second and third degree.

To solve equations of the second degree, the Arabs could use the formula given by al-Khwarizmi which dates back, as we have said, to Babylonian times. But the great Arab mathematicians always accompanied this formula with geometric demonstrations which al-Khwarizmi's successors largely borrowed from Book II of Euclid's *Elements*. If the great mathematicians took the trouble to demonstrate the algebraic formulas whereby they solved equations of the second degree, it was not to make a "translation" of them which would in any case have been superfluous. A demonstration cannot be considered as a translation. If they did so it was, as they said explicitly themselves, to provide a proof of the validity of the algebraic formulas used.

3. The attribution to Sharaf al-Din al-Tusi of "methods such as derivatives, that were only to be named as such at a later date" cannot be justified by reference to his writings. This misunderstanding has been refuted on two occasions, once by the author of this letter in the review *Annals of Science* (44, 1987), and secondly in an article published by Mr. Hogendijk, a mathematician and historian of Arab mathematics, in the review *Historia mathematica* (16, 1989).

Khalil Jaouiche
CNRS, Paris

Dionysian festivals in Andalusia

In your December 1989 issue, which made interesting reading, Jean Duvignaud refers in his article "The festive spirit" to the "*Rocío*, the curious Andalusian festival of the Virgin of the Marshes, in which Arab, Christian and Gypsy allegories overlap". One might add that it also bears traces of allegories reaching back to the Dionysian rituals of Graeco-Roman tradition.

According to oral tradition, the statue of the Virgin of the *Rocío* was discovered by a hunter in Andalusia in the early fifteenth century. The fact that the dominant culture was Islamic at that time clearly justifies Professor Duvignaud's remarks about Arab and Christian allegories. But why leave out the Dionysian cult which is known to have reached the shores of Iberia? Roman authors tell of the Greek colonies which were founded nine centuries before the Christian era in the marshy estuary of the Guadalquivir (the site of the present hermitage of El Rocío) where other populations later settled. Vestiges unearthed near the sanctuary suggest that a Roman temple once stood on this site.

Traditions once thought lost sometimes reapppear in a different form but with all their original vigour, their specific features and their rites. Here, perhaps, lies the originality of Andalusia, whose people have always lived at a cultural crossroads.

Francisco J. Carrillo
Unesco, Paris

GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA

Scholars from many countries are collaborating on Unesco's 8-volume **General History of Africa** which is being prepared under the intellectual responsibility of an International Scientific Committee for the Drafting of a General History of Africa, two-thirds of whose members are African. Africa is considered as a totality in this panoramic history which shows the changing relationships between the various parts of the continent as well as connections with other continents, thus bringing out the contribution Africa has made to the development of mankind.

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Jean-Pierre Vélis

Through a glass, darkly

Functional illiteracy in industrialized countries

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